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MISCELLANIES



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CRITICAL MISCELLANIES

BY

JOHN MORLEY

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NOTE

I HAVE to thank the proprietors of the *Times*, and of the *Nineteenth Century*, for leave to reprint articles from their pages. They are but fugitive pieces, yet perhaps not altogether without a clue.

J. M.

April, 1908.



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MACHIAVELLI

MACHIAVELLI

I

THE greatest of the Florentines has likened worldly fame to the breath of the wind that blows now one way and now another way, and changes name as it changes quarter. From every quarter and all the points of the historieal compass, veering gusts of publice judgment have carried incessantly along from country to country and from generation to generation, with countless mutations of aspect and of innuendo, the sinister renown of Machiavelli. Before he had been dead fifty years, his name had become a byword and a proverb. From Thomas Cromwell and Elizabeth; from the massacre of St. Bartholomew, through League and Fronde, through Louis xiv., Revolution, and Empire, down to the third Napoleon and the days of December; from the Lutheran Reformation down to the blood and

THE ROMANES LECTURE, DELIVERED IN THE SHELDONIAN THEATRE AT OXFORD, June 2, 1897. Some notes to this lecture will be found in the Appendix. The references to them in the text are given in small Arabic numerals.

iron of Prince Bismarck; from Ferdinand the Catholic down to Don Carlos; from the Sack of Rome down to Gioberti, Mazzini, and Cavour: in all the great countries all over the West, this strange shade is seen haunting men's minds; exciting, frightening, provoking, perplexing, like some unholy necromancer bewildering reason and conscience by paradox and riddle. So far from withering or fading, his repute and his writing seem to attract deeper consideration as time goes on, and they have never been objects of more copious attention throughout Europe than in the half-century that is now closing.¹

In the long and fierce struggle from the fifteenth century onwards, among rival faiths and between contending forces in civil government, Machiavelli was hated and attacked from every side. In the great rising up of new types of life in the Church and of life in the State, his name stood for something that partisans of old and new alike abhorred. The Church at first tolerated, if it did not even patronise, his writings; but soon, under the double stress of the Reformation in Germany on the one hand, and the pagan Renaissance in Italy on the other, it placed him in that Index of forbidden books which now first (1557), in dread of the new art of printing, crept into formal existence. Speedily he came to be denounced as schismatical, heretical, perverse, the impious foe of faith and truth. He was burnt in effigy. His book was denounced as

written with the very fingers of Satan himself. The vituperation of the sixteenth century in the whole range of its controversies has never been surpassed in any age either among learned or unlearned men, and the dead Machiavelli came in for his full share of unmeasured words. As Voltaire has said of Dante that his fame is secure because nobody reads him, so in an inverse sense the bad name of Machiavelli grew worse, because men reproached, confuted, and cursed, but seldom read. Catholics attacked him as the enemy of the Holy See, and Protestants attacked him because he looked to a restoration of the spirit of ancient Rome, instead of a restoration of the faith and discipline of the primitive Church. While both of them railed against him, Catholic and Protestant each reviled the other as Machiavellist. In France national prejudice against the famous Italian queen-mother hit Machiavelli too, for his book was declared to be the oracle of Catherine dei Medici, to whose father it was dedicated; it was held responsible for the Huguenot wars and the Bartholomew massacre. In Spain opposite ground was taken, and he who elsewhere was blamed as the advocate of persecution, was abominated here as the enemy of wars of religion, and the advocate of that monstrous thing, civil toleration. In England, royalists called him an atheist, and roundheads called him a Jesuit. A recent German writer has noted three hundred and ninety-five references

to him in our Elizabethan literature, all fixing him with the craft, malice, and hypocrisy of the Evil One.² Everybody knows how Hudibras finds in his Christian name the origin of our domestic title for the devil, though scholars have long taught us to refer it to Nyke, the water-goblin of Norse mythology.³

Some divines scented mischief in the comparative method, and held up their hands at the impudent wickedness that dared to find a parallel between people in the Bible and people in profane history, between King David and Philip of Macedon. Whenever a bad name floated into currency, it was flung at Machiavelli, and his own name was counted among the worst that could be flung at a bad man. Averroes for a couple of centuries became a conventional label for a scoffer and an atheist; and Machiavelli, though he cared no more for the abstract problems that exercised the Moslem thinker, than he would have cared for the inward sanctities of Thomas à Kempis, was held up to odium as an Averroist. The Annals of Tacitus were discovered: his dark ironies on Tiberius and the rest did not prevent one school of politicians from treating his book as a manual for tyrants, while another school applied it against the Holy Roman Empire; his name was caught up in the storm of the hour, and Machiavellism and Tacitism became convertible terms.⁴

It is not possible here to follow the varying fates

of Machiavelli's name and books.* The tale of Machiavellian criticism in our own century is a long one. That criticism has followed the main stream of political events in continental Europe; for it is events after all that make the fortune of books. Revolution in France, unification in Italy, unification in Germany, the disappearance of the Temporal Power, the principle of Nationality, the idea of the Armed People, have all in turn raised the questions to which Machiavelli gave such daring point. On the medallion that commemorates him in the church of Santa Croce at Florence, are the words, *Tanto nomini nullum par elogium*, So great a name no praise can match. We only need to think of Michelangelo and Galileo reposing near him, in order to realise the extravagance of such a phrase, and to understand that reaction in his favour has gone almost as intolerably far as the old diatribes against him.

It may be doubted whether in this country Machiavelli has ever been widely read, though echoes have been incessant. Thomas Cromwell, the powerful minister of Henry VIII., the *malleus monachorum*, told Cardinal Pole that he had better

* The edition of the *Prince*, published by the Clarendon Press, with Mr. Burd's most competent and copious critical apparatus, and Lord Acton's closely packed introduction, supplies all that is wanted. The same Press has republished the English translation of the *Prince* by N. H. Thomson, who has also executed a translation of the *Discourses* (1883), and now (1906) of the *Florentine History*.

fling aside dreamers like Plato, and read a new book by an ingenious Italian who treated the arts of government practically. Cromwell in his early wanderings had been more than once in Italy, and he was probably at Florence at the very time when Machiavelli was writing his books at his country farm.⁵ But a more shining figure in English history than Cromwell, was even more profoundly attracted by the genius of Machiavelli; this was Bacon. It was natural for that vast and comprehensive mind to admire the extension to the sphere of civil government of the same method that he was advocating in the investigation of external nature. 'We are much beholden,' Bacon said, 'to Machiavel and others that wrote what men do, and not what they ought to do.' The rejection of *a priori* and abstract principles, and of authority as the test of truth; the substitution of chains of observed fact for syllogism with major premiss unproved—such a revolution in method could not be reserved for one department of thought. Bacon's references are mainly to the *Discourses* and not to the *Prince*, but he had well digested both.⁶ The *Essays* bear the impress of Machiavelli's positive spirit, and Bacon's ideal of history is his. 'Its true office is to represent the events themselves, together with the counsels, and to leave the observations and conclusions thereupon to the liberty and faculty of every man's judgment.' His own history of Henry VII. is a good example of such a life as Machiavelli would have written of such a hero.⁷

The most powerful English thinker of Machiavelli's political school is Hobbes. He drew similar lessons from a similar experience — the distractions of Civil War at home, and the growth, which he watched during many years of exile, of centralised monarchy abroad. Less important is Harrington, whose *Oceana* or model of a commonwealth was once so famous, and is in truth one of the most sensible productions of that kind of literature. Harrington travelled in Italy, was much at home with Italian polities and books on polities, and perhaps studied Machiavelli more faithfully than any other of his countrymen. He tells us, writing after the Restoration, that his works had then fallen into neglect.⁸ Clarendon has a remarkable passage (*Hist.*, bk. x. § 169) vindicating Machiavelli against the ill name that he had got from people who did not well consider his words and his drift, and applying judicially enough the Italian's view of Borgia to our great Oliver and his counsellors. Scattered through the *Patriot King* and other writings of Bolingbroke are half a dozen references to Machiavelli.* but they have the air, to use a phrase of Bacon's, of being but cloves stuck in to spicke the dish ; the Italian's pregnant thinking has no serious place in an author whose performances are little more than splendid beating of the wind. Hume had evidently read the *Discourses*, the

* E.g. *Patriot King*, pp. 106, 118. *On the Policy of the Athenians*, p. 243.

Prince, and the *History of Florence*, with attention; and with his usual faculty for hitting the nail on the head, he avows a suspicion that the world is still too young to fix many general truths in politics. We have not as yet had experience of three thousand years. We do not know, says Hume, of what great changes human nature may show itself susceptible, nor what great revolutions may come about in men's customs and principles.⁹

Benjamin Constant said there were only two books that he had read with pleasure since the Revolution, the *Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz* and Machiavelli's *History of Florence*. It would take a long chapter to draw a full comparison between Machiavelli and Montesquieu, who was undoubtedly set by him on some trains of thinking both in his short book on the Romans, and his more memorable one on Laws. It may be too much to say, as some critics have said, that all the great modern ideas have their beginning in Montesquieu. But this at least is true among other marked claims to be made for him, that in spite of much looseness of definition and a thousand imperfections in detail, he launched effectually on European thought the conception of social phenomena as being no less subject to general laws than all other phenomena. Of a fundamental extension of this kind, Machiavelli was in every way incapable, nor did the state of any of the sciences at that date permit it. As for secondary differences, it is enough to say that

Machiavelli put the level of human character low, and Montesquieu put it high; that one was always looking to fact, the other to idea; that one was sombre, the other buoyant, cheerful, and an optimist; Montesquieu confident in the moral forces of mankind, Machiavelli leaving moral forces vague, not knowing where to look for them. Finally, 'Montesquieu's book is a study, Machiavelli's is a political act, an attempt at political resurrection.'¹⁰

II

Machiavelli was born in 1469 (two years later than Erasmus), and when he turned to serious writing, he was five-and-forty. His life had been interesting and important. For fifteen years he held the post of secretary of one of the departments in the government of Florence, where he was brought into close relations with some of the most remarkable personages and events of his time. He went four times on a mission to the King of France; he was with Cæsar Borgia in the ruthless campaign of 1502; he did the business of his republic with Pope Julius II. at Rome, and with the Emperor Maximilian at Innsbruck. The modern practice of resident ambassadors had not yet established itself in the European system, and Machiavelli was never more than an envoy of secondary rank.¹¹ But he was in personal communication with sovereigns and ministers, and he

was a watchful observer of all their ways and motives. We need not here concern ourselves with the thousand chances and changes of Italian policies in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the long struggle between freedom and tyranny in his native Florence, Machiavelli belonged to the popular party. When they fell in 1512, and the Medici came back, he was turned out of his post, thrown into prison, put to the question with ropes and pulleys according to the hard fashion of the time, shared the benefit of the amnesty accorded when Leo x. ascended the papal throne, and then withdrew to San Casciano. This was the time when he composed most of the writings that have made him famous. Here is his picture of himself, in a letter to a friend (December 10, 1513):—

‘I am at my farm; and, since my last misfortunes, have not been in Florence twenty days. I rise with the sun, and go into a wood of mine that is being cut, where I remain two hours inspecting the work of the previous day and conversing with the woodcutters, who have always some trouble on hand among themselves or with their neighbours. When I leave the wood, I proceed to a well, and thence to the place which I use for snaring birds, with a book under my arm—Dante, or Petrarch, or one of the minor poets, like Tibullus or Ovid. I read the story of their passions, and let their loves remind me of my own, which is a pleasant pastime for a while. Next I take the road, enter the inn door, talk with the passers-by, inquire the news of the neighbourhood, listen to a variety

of matters, and make note of the different tastes and humours of men. This brings me to dinner-time, when I join my family and eat the poor produce of my farm. After dinner I go back to the inn, where I generally find the host and a butcher, a miller, and a pair of bakers. With these companions I play the fool all day at cards or backgammon: a thousand squabbles, a thousand insults and abusive dialogues take place, while we haggle over a farthing, and shout loud enough to be heard from San Casciano. But when evening falls, I go home and enter my writing-room. On the threshold I put off my country habit, filthy with mud and mire, and array myself in royal courtly garments; thus worthily attired, I make my entrance into the ancient courts of the men of old, where they receive me with love, and where I feed upon that food which only is my own, and for which I was born. I feel no shame in conversing with them and asking them the reason of their actions. They, moved by their humanity, make answer; for four hours' space I feel no annoyance, I forget all care; poverty cannot frighten, nor death appal me. I am carried away to their society. And since Dante says "that there is no science unless we retain what we have learned," I have set down what I have gained from their discourse, and composed a treatise, *De Principatibus*, in which I enter as deeply as I can into the science of the subject, with reasonings on the nature of principality, its several species, and how they are acquired, how maintained, how lost. If you ever liked any of my scribblings, this ought to suit your taste. To a prince, and especially to a new prince, it ought to prove acceptable. Therefore I am dedicating it to the Magnificence of Giuliano.*

* Symonds's translation, *Age of the Despots*, 244-6.

Machiavelli was not meant either by temperament or principle to be a willing martyr. Not for him was the stern virtue of Dante, who accepted lifelong exile rather than restoration with dishonour, content from any corner of the earth to wonder at the sun and the stars, and under any sky to meditate all sweetest truths (*le dolcissime verità*). Not for the ambitious and practical politician was the choice of Savonarola, who at the moment when Machiavelli was crossing the threshold of public life, had taken death by its savage hand, rather than cease from his warnings, that no good could come to Florence were it not from the fear of God and the reform of manners. Nobody had in him less of the Stoic than Machiavelli; his character was no more austere than the Italian morality of his day; his purse was painfully lean; his active and restless mind suffered from that 'malady of lost power' which is apt to afflict members of Opposition, and he longed to be back in the business of the State. So he dedicated his book to Lorenzo, in the hope that such speaking proof of experience and capacity would induce those who had destroyed the freedom of his city, to give him public employment. His suppleness did not pay. Nothing came of the dedication for several years. Then some trivial duties were found for Machiavelli, and one important literary task was intrusted to him, the history of Florene. This he completed and dedicated to Clement VII. in 1525. To the same period belongs

a comedy, which some have described as worthy of Aristophanes and hardly second to Molière's *Tartufe*. Like Bacon and some others who have written the shrewdest things on human conduct and the arts of success, he had made but a sorry mess of his own chances and gifts. It must always interest us to watch how men take ill usage from the world, and sad ironical miscarriages of life. Machiavelli's was one of those grave intellects, apt for serious thought, yet that easily turn to levity; console themselves for failure by mockery of themselves; and repay Fortune with her own banter. This is the vein of the brilliant burlesque and satire, with which this versatile genius diversified his closing days. Still, with indomitable perseverance he clung to public things, and he now composed the dialogues on the Art of War, to induce his countrymen to substitute for mercenary armies a national militia — to-day one of the organic ideas of the European system. *Amo la patria mia più dell'anima*, he wrote to a friend just before his death, and one view of Machiavelli is that he was ever the lion masquerading in the fox's skin, an impassioned patriot, under all his craft and all his bitter mockery. Even Mazzini — so little a disciple of his that he explained the ruin of Italy by the disastrous fact of Machiavelli having prevailed over Dante — admits that he had 'a profoundly Italian heart.' In 1527 he died. The *Prince* was not printed and published until five years later.

Machiavelli's active life, then, was passed in council-chambers, camps, courts. He pondered over all that he had seen in the light of such antique books as he had read,—Livy, Polybius, Tacitus, some portion of Aristotle's *Politics*, Dante, Petrarch, Cicero's *Offices*, Caesar, Latin Poets, extracts from Thucydides (probably in Latin versions). He owns his debt to ancient writers, and in a sense nobody borrowed more, yet few are more original. If he had mastered Thucydides, he would have recalled that first great chapter in European literature, still indeed the greatest in its kind, of reflections on a revolution, where with incomparable insight and fidelity the historian analyses the demoralisation of the Hellenic world as it lay, like the Italian world long ages after, a prey to intestine faction and the ruinous invocation of foreign aid.* These terrible calamities, says Thucydides (iii. 82-84), always have been and always will be, so long as human nature remains the same. Words cease to have the same relations to things, and their meanings are changed to suit the ingenuities of enterprise and the atrocities of revenge. Frantic energy is the quality most valued, and the man of violence is the man who is trusted. The simplicity that is a chief ingredient of a noble nature, men

* Thucydides was translated by Laurentius Valla in 1452, and a revised version of the translation was produced thirty years later. One of the fullest of the few references to Thucydides is *Disc. III. xvi.*

laugh to scorn. Inferior intellects succeed best. Revenge becomes dearer than self-preservation, and men actually have a sweeter pleasure in the revenge that goes with perfidy, than if it were open. All this was just as true of Florence in the sixteenth century, as it was of Athens, Corinth, and Coreyra in the fifth century before Christ. The postulate of Thueydides, that human nature should remain the same, still held good, as it has indeed held good at many a stormy period since, the social progress of the ages notwithstanding.

Whether the moral state of Italy was intrinsically and substantially worse than that of other European nations, is a question which those who know most, are least disposed to answer offhand.¹² Machiavelli was as little capable of the fine and true saying of the Greek historian about Simplicity, as he was of the Greek poet's famous lines about love of power against right.* Still Italy presents some peculiarities that shed over her civilisation at this time a curious and deadly iridescence. Passions moved in strange orbits. Private depravity and political debasement went with one of the most brilliant intellectual awakenings in the history of the western world. Selfishness, violence, craft, and corruption darkened and defiled the administration of sacred things. If politics were divorced from morals, so was theology. Modern conscience is shocked by the resort to

* *Phoenissæ*, 524.

hired crime and stealthy assassination, especially by poison. Mariana, the famous Spanish Jesuit, tells us (*De Rege*, i. 7) that when he was teaching theology in Sicily (1567), a certain young prince asked him whether it was lawful to slay a tyrant by poison. The theologian did not find it easy to draw a distinction between poison and steel, but at last he fell upon a reason (and a most absurd reason it was) for his decision that a poniard is permitted and white powder is forbidden. What distinguishes the Italian Renaissance from such epochs of luxury and corruption as the French Regency, is this contempt of human life, the fury of private revenge, the spirit of atrocious faithlessness and crime. 'Italian society admired the bravo almost as much as Imperial Rome admired the gladiator: it assumed that genius combined with force of character released men from the shackles of ordinary morality.' Only a giant like Michelangelo escaped the deadly climate. We see the violence of Michelangelo's sublime despair in the immortal marbles of the Medicean chapel, executed while Machiavelli was still alive—Lorenzo, nephew of Pope Leo x., and father of Catherine dei Medici, silent, pensive, finger upon lip, seeming to meditate under the shadow of his helmet some stroke of dubious war or craft, while the sombre superhuman figures of Night and Dawn and Day proclaim 'it is best to sleep and be of stone, not to see and not to feel, while such misery and shame endure.'

Machiavelli's merit in the history of political literature is his method. We may smile at the uncritical simplicity with which he discusses Romulus and Remus, Moses, Cyrus, and Theseus, as if they were all astute politicians of Florentine faction. He recalls the orator in the French Constituent Assembly who proposed to send to Crete for an authentic copy of the laws of Minos. But he withdrew polities from scholasticism, and based their consideration upon observation and experience. It is quite true that he does not classify his problems; he does not place them in their proper subordination to one another; he often brings together facts that are not of the same order and do not support the same conclusion.* Nothing, again, is easier than to find contradictions in Machiavelli. He was a man of the world reflecting over the things that he had seen in public life; more systematic than observers like Retz or Commynes—whom good critics call the French Machiavelli—but not systematic as Hobbes is. Human things have many sides and many aspects, and an observant man of the world does not confine himself to one way of looking at them, from fear of being thought inconsistent. To put on the blinkers of system was alien to his nature and his object. Contradictions were inevitable, but the general texture of his thought is close enough.¹³

Machiavelli was not the first of his countrymen

* Janet's *Hist. de la Science Politique*, i. 539 (3rd ed.).

to write down thoughts on the problems of the time, though it has been observed that he is the first writer, still celebrated, ‘who discussed grave questions in modern language’ (Mackintosh). Apart from Dante and Petrarch, various less famous men had theorised about affairs of state. Guicciardini, the contemporary and friend of Machiavelli, like him a man of public business and of the world, composed observations on government, of which Cavour said that they showed a better comprehension of affairs than did the author of the *Prince* and the *Discourses*. But then the latter had the better talent of writing. One most competent Italian critic calls his prose ‘divine,’* and a foreigner has perhaps no right to differ; only what word is then left for the really great writers, who to intellectual strength add moral grandeur? Napoleon hated a general who made mental pictures of what he saw, instead of looking at the thing clearly as through a field-glass. Machiavelli’s is the style of the field-glass. ‘I want to write something,’ he said, ‘that may be useful to the understanding man; it seems better for me to go behind to the real truth of things, rather than to a fancy picture.’ Every sentence represents a thought or a thing. He is never open to the reproach thrown by Aristotle at Plato: ‘This is to talk poetic metaphor.’ As has been said much less truly of Montesquien, reflection is not broken

* De Sanctis, *Storia della Let. Ital.*, ii. 82.

by monuments and landscapes. He has the highest of all the virtues that prose-writing can possess — save the half-dozen cases in literature of genius with unconquerable wings,—he is simple, unaffected, direct, vivid, and rational. He possesses that truest of all forms of irony, which consists in literal statement, and of which you are not sure whether it is irony or *naïveté*. He disentangles his thought from the fact so skilfully and so clean, that it looks almost obvious. Nobody has ever surpassed him in the power of throwing pregnant vigour into a single concentrated word. Of some pages it has been well said that they are written with the point of a stiletto. He uses few of our loud easy words of praise and blame, he is not often sorry or glad, he does not smile and he does not scold, he is seldom indignant and he is never surprised. He has not even our mastering human infirmity of trying to persuade. His business is that of the clinical lecturer, explaining the nature of the malady, the proper treatment, the chances of recovery. He strips away the flowing garments of convention and commonplace; closes his will against sympathy and feeling; ignores pity as an irrelevance, just as the operating surgeon does. In the phrase about Fontenelle, he shows as good a heart as can be made out of brains. What concerns Machiavelli, the Italian critic truly says, ‘is not a thing being reasonable, or moral, or beautiful, but that it is.’ Yet at the bottom of all the con-

fused clamour against him, people knew what they meant, and their instinct was not unsound. Mankind, and well they know it, are far too profoundly concerned in right and wrong, in mercy and cruelty, in justice and oppression, to favour a teacher who, even for a scientific purpose of his own, forgets the awful difference. Commonplace, after all, is exactly what contains the truths that are indispensable.

III

Like most of those who take a pride in seeing human nature as it is, Machiavelli only saw half of it. We must remember the atmosphere of craft, suspicion, fraud, violence, in which he had moved, with Borgias, Medici, Pope Julius, Maximilian, Louis XII., and the reckless factions of Florence. His estimate was low. Mankind, he says, are more prone to evil than to good. We may say this of them generally, that they are ungrateful, fickle, deceivers, greedy of gain, runaways before peril. While you serve them, they are all yours — lives, goods, children — so long as no danger is at hand: when the hour of need draws nigh, they turn their backs. They are readier to seek revenge for wrong, than to prove gratitude for service: as Tacitus says of people who lived in Italy long ages before, readier to pay back injury than kindness. Men never do anything good, unless they are

driven; and where they have their choice, and can use what licence they will, all is filled with disorder and confusion. They are taken in by appearances. They follow the event. They easily become corrupted. Their will is weak. They know not how to be either thoroughly good or thoroughly bad; they vacillate between; they take middle paths, the worst of all. Men are a little breed.*

All this is not satire, it is not misanthropy; it is the student of the art of government, thinking over the material with which he has to deal. These judgments of Machiavelli have none of the wrath of Juvenal, none of the impious trueulence of Swift. They cut deeper into simple reality than polished oracles from the moralists of the boudoir. They have not the bitterness that hides in the laugh of Molière, nor the chagrin and disdain with which Pascal broods over unhappy man and his dark lot. Least of all are they the voice of the preacher calling sinners to repentance. The tale is only a rather grim record, from inspection, of the foundations on which the rulers of states must do their best to build.

Goethe's maxim that, if you would improve a man, it is no bad thing to let him suppose that you already think him that which you would have him to be, would have seemed to Machiavelli as foolish for his purpose as if you were to furnish an

* 'However we brave it out, we men are a little breed.'—Tennyson's *Maud*, i. 5.

architect with clay, and bid him to treat it as if it were iron. He will suffer no abstraction to interrupt positive observation.¹⁴ Man is what he is, and so he needs to be bitted and bridled with laws, and now and again to be treated to a stiff dose of '*medicine forti*,' in the shape of fire, bullet, axe, halter, and dungeon. At any rate, Machiavelli does not leave human nature out, and this is one secret of his hold. It is not with pale opinion that he argues, it is passions and interests in all the flush of action. It is, in truth, in every case,—Burke, Rousseau, Toqueville, Hobbes, Bentham, Mill, and the rest—always the moralist who interests men most within the publicist. Machiavelli was assuredly a moralist, though of a peculiar sort, and this is what makes him, as he has been well called, a contemporary of every age and a citizen of all countries.

To the question whether the world grows better or worse, Machiavelli gave an answer that startles an age like ours, subsisting on its faith in progress. The world, he says, neither grows better nor worse ; it is always the same. Human fortunes are never still ; they are every moment either going up or sinking down. Yet among all nations and states, the same desires, the same humours prevail ; they are what they always were. Men are for travelling on the beaten track. Diligently study bygone things, and in every State you will be able to discover the things to come. All the things that

have been, may be again. Just as the modern physicist tells us that neither physical nor chemical transformation changes the mass nor the weight of any quantity of matter, so Machiavelli judged the good and evil in the world to be ever identical.

‘This bad and this good shift from land to land,’ he says, ‘as we may see from ancient empires; they rose and fell with the changes of their usage, but the world remained as it was. The only difference was that it concentrated its power (*virtù*) in Assyria, then in Media, then in Persia, until at last it came to Italy and Rome.’

In our age, when we think of the chequered course of human time, of the shocks of irreconcilable civilisation, of war, trade, faction, revolution, empire, laws, creeds, sects, we look for a clue to the vast maze of historic and pre-historic fact. Machiavelli seeks no clue to his distribution of good and evil. He seeks no moral interpretation for the mysterious scroll. We obey laws that we do not know, but cannot resist. We can only make an effort to seize events as they whirl by; to extort from them a maxim, a precept, or a principle, that may serve our immediate turn. Fortune, he says, — that is, Providence, or else Circumstance, or the Stars, — is mistress of more than half we do. What is her deep secret, he shows no curiosity to fathom. He contents himself with a maxim for the practical man (*Prince*, xxv.), — that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, for Fortune is a

woman, and to master her, she must be boldly handled.

Whatever force or law may control this shifting distribution of imperial destinies, nothing, said Machiavelli, could prevent any native of Italy or of Greece, unless the Greek had turned Turk, or the Italian Transalpine, from blaming his own time and praising the glories of time past. ‘What,’ he cries, ‘can redeem an age from the extremity of misery, shame, reproach, where there is no regard to religion, to laws, to arms, where all is tainted and tarnished with every foulness. And these vices are all the more hateful, as they most abound in those who sit in the judgment-seat, are men’s masters, and seek men’s reverence. I, at all events,’ he concludes, with a glow that almost recalls the moving close of the *Agricola*, ‘shall make bold to say how I regard old times and new, so that the minds of the young who shall read these writings of mine, may shun the new examples and follow old. For it is the duty of a good man, at least to strive that he may teach to others those sound lessons which the spite of time or fortune hath hindered him from executing, so that many having learned them, some better loved by heaven may one day have power to apply them.’

What were the lessons? They were in fact only one, that the central secret of the ruin and distraction of Italy was weakness of will, want of fortitude, force, and resolution. The abstract

question of the best form of government — perhaps the most barren of all the topics that have ever occupied speculative minds — was with Machiavelli strictly secondary. He saw small despotic states harried by their petty tyrants, he saw republics worn out by faction and hate. Machiavelli himself had faith in free republics as the highest type of government; but whether you have republic or tyranny matters less, he seems to say, than that the governing power should be strong in the force of its own arms, intelligent, concentrated, resolute. We might say of him that he is for half his time engaged in examining the fitness of means to other people's ends, himself neutral. But then, as nature used to be held to abhor a vacuum, so the impatience of man is loth to tolerate neutrality. He has been charged with inconsistency, because in the *Prince* he lays down the conditions on which an absolute ruler, rising to power by force of genius backed by circumstance, may maintain that power with safety to himself and most advantage to his subjects; while in the *Discourses* he examines the rules that enable a self-governing State to retain its freedom. The cardinal precepts are the same. In either case, the saving principle is one: self-sufficiency, military strength, force, flexibility, address, — above all, no half-measures. In either case, the preservation of the State is equally the one end, reason of State equally the one adequate test and justification of the means. The *Prince*

deals with one problem, the *Discourses* with the other, but the spring of Machiavelli's political inspirations is the same, to whatever type of rule they are applied — the secular State supreme; self-interest and self-regard avowed as the single principles of State action; material force the master key to civil policy. Clear intelligence backed by unsparring will, unflinching energy, remorseless vigour, the brain to plan and the hand to strike — here is the salvation of States, whether monarchies or republics. The spirit of humility and resignation that Christianity had brought into the world, he contemns and repudiates. That whole scheme of the Middle Ages in which invisible powers rule all our mortal affairs, he dismisses. Calculation, courage, fit means for resolute ends, human force, — only these can rebuild a world in ruins.*

Some will deem it inconsistent, that with so few illusions about the weaknesses of human nature, yet he should have been so firm, in what figures in current demoeraey as trust in the people. Like Aristotle, he held the many to be in the long-run the best judges; but, unlike Goethe, who said that the public is always in a state of self-delusion about details though scarcely ever about broad truths, Machiavelli declared that the public may go wrong about generalities, while as to particulars they are

* See Ferrari's *Hist. de la Raison d'État*, p. 260; de Sanetis, *Storia della Let. Italiana*, ii. 74-89; Quinet, *Révolutions d'Italie*, ii. 122.

usually right.¹⁵ The people are less ungrateful than a prince, and where they are ungrateful, it is from less dishonourable motive. The multitude is wiser and more constant than a prince. Furious and uncontrolled multitudes go wrong, but then so do furious and uncontrolled princes. Both err, when not held back by fear of consequences. The people are fickle and thankless, but so are princes. ‘As for prudence and stability, I say that a people is more prudent, more stable, and of better judgment than a prince.’ Never let a prince, he said—and perhaps we might say, never let a parliament—complain of the faults of a people under his rule, for they are due either to his own negligencē, or else to his own example, and if you consider a people given to robbery and outrages against law, you will generally find that they only copy their masters. Above all and in any case the ruler, whether hereditary or an usurper, can have no safety unless he finds himself on popular favour and goodwill. This he repeats a hundred times. ‘Better far than any number of fortresses, is not to be hated by your people.’

It is then to the free Roman commonwealth that Machiavelli would turn his countrymen. In that strong respect for law, that devotion to country, that unquailing courage, that energy of purpose, which has been truly called the essence of free Rome, he found the pattern that he wanted. Modern Germans, for good reasons of their own,

have taken to praise him, but Machiavelli has nothing to do with that most brilliant of German scholars, who idolises Julius Cæsar, then despatches Cato as a pedant and Cieero as a coxcomb. You will hardly find in Machiavelli a good word for any destroyer of a free government. Let nobody, he says, be cheated by the glory of Cæsar. Historians have been spoiled by his success, and by the duration of the empire that continued his name. If you will only follow the history of the empire, then will you soon know, with a vengeance, what is the debt of Rome, Italy, and the world, to Cæsar.

Nobody has stated the argument against the revolutionary dictator more clearly or tersely than Machiavelli. He applauded the old Romans because their policy provided by a regular ordinance for an emergency, by the institution of a constitutional dictator for a fixed term, and to meet a definite occasion. ‘In a republic nothing should be left to extraordinary modes of government; because though such a mode may do good for the moment, still the example does harm, seeing that a practice of breaking the laws for good ends lends a colour to breaches of law for ends that are bad.’ Occasions no doubt arise when no ordinary means will produce reform, and then you must have recourse to violence and arms: a man must make himself supreme. But then, unfortunately, if he make himself supreme by violence, he is probably a bad man, for by such means a good man will not con-

sent to climb to power. No more will a bad man who has become supreme in this way be likely to use his ill-gotten power for good ends. Here is the eternal dilemma of a State in convulsion. (*Disc. i. 34, 18, 10; ii. 2.*)

He forbids us in any case to call it virtue to slay fellow-citizens, to betray friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion; such practices may win empire, but not fair fame. A prince who clears out a population — here we may think of James I. and Cromwell in Ireland, and the authors of many a sweeping clearance since — and transplants them from province to province, as a herdsman moves his flock, does what is most cruel, most alien, not only to Christianity, but to common humanity. Far better for a man to choose a private life, than be a king on the terms of making havoc such as this with the lives of other men (*Disc. i. 26*).

IV

It may be true, as Danton said, that 'twere better to be a poor fisherman than to meddle with the government of men. Yet nations and men find themselves inexorably confronted by the practical question. Government they must find. Given a corrupt, a divided, a distracted community, how are you to restore it? The last chapter of the *Prince* is an eloquent appeal to the representative of the House of Medici to heal the bruises and bind

up the wounds of his torn and enslaved country. The view has been taken¹⁶ that this last chapter has nothing to do with the fundamental ideas of the book; that its glow is incompatible with the iron harshness of all that has gone before; that it was an afterthought, dictated partly by Machiavelli's personal hopes, and then picked up later by his defenders as whitewashing guilty maxims by ascribing them to large and lofty purpose. The balance of argument seems on the whole to lean this way, and Machiavelli for five-and-twenty chapters was thinking of new princes generally, and not of a great Italian deliverer. Yet he was not a man cast in a single mould. It may be that on reviewing his chapters, his heart became suddenly alive to their frigidity, and that the closing words flowed from the deeps of what was undoubtedly sincere and urgent feeling.

However this may be, whether the whole case of Italy, or the special case of any new prince, was in his contemplation, the quality of the man required is drawn in four chapters (xv.-xviii.) with piercing eye and a hand that does not flinch. The ruler's business is to save the State. He cannot practise all virtues, first because he is not very likely to possess them, and next because, where so many people are bad, he would not be a match for the world if he were perfectly good. Still he should be on his guard against all vices, so far as possible; he should scrupulously abstain from every vice that

might endanger his government. There are two ways of carrying on the fight — one by laws, the other by force. The first is the proper and peculiar distinction of man; the second is the mark of the brute. As the first is not always enough, you must sometimes resort to the second. You must be both lion and fox, and the man who is only lion cannot be wise. A wise prince neither can, nor ought to, keep his word, when to keep his word would injure either himself or the State, or when the reasons that made him give a promise have passed away. If men were all good, a maxim like this would be bad; but as men are inclined to evil, and would not all keep faith with you, why should you keep faith with them? *Nostra cattività, la lor* — our badness, their badness (*Mandrag.* ii. 6). There are some good qualities that the new ruler need not have; yet he should seem to have them. It is well to appear merciful, faithful, religious, and it is well to be so. Religion is the most necessary of all for a prince to seek credit for. But the new prince should know how to change to the contrary of all these things, when they are in the way of the public good. For it is frequently necessary for the upholding of the State — and here is the sentence that has done so much to damn its writer — to go to work against faith, against charity, against humanity, against religion. It is not possible for a new prince to observe all the rules for which men are reckoned good.

The property of his subjects he will most carefully leave alone; a man will sooner forgive the slaying of his father than the confiscation of his patrimony. He should try to have a character for mercy, but this should never be allowed to prevent severity on just occasion. He must bear in mind the good saying reported in Livy, that many people know better how to keep themselves from doing wrong, than how to correct the wrong-doing of others. Never ought he to let excess of trust make him careless, nor excess of distrust to make him intolerable. He would be lucky if he could make himself both loved and feared; but if circumstance should force a choice, then of the two he had better be feared. To be feared is not the same as to be hated, and the two things to be most diligently avoided of all are hatred on the one hand, and contempt on the other.

Test there is none, save reason of State. We should never condemn a man for extraordinary acts to which he has been compelled to resort in establishing his empire or founding a republic. In a case where the safety of a country is concerned, whether it be princedom or republic, no regard is to be paid to justice or injustice, to pity or severity, to glory or shame; every other consideration firmly thrust aside, that course alone is to be followed which may preserve to the country its existence and its freedom. Diderot pithily put the superficial impression of all this, when he said that you might head these

chapters as 'The circumstances under which it is right for a Prince to be a Scoundrel.' A profounder commentary of a concrete kind is furnished by Mommsen's account of Sulla*—an extraordinary literary masterpiece, even in the view of those who think its politics most perverse. Such a Sulla was the real type of Machiavelli's reformer of a rotten State.

It has been a commonplace of reproachful criticism that Machiavelli should have chosen for his hero Cæsar Borgia.† Not only was Borgia a monster, it is said, but he failed. For little more than four years the baleful meteor flamed across the sky, then vanished. If only success should command admiration, Borgia and his swiftly shattered fortunes might well be indifferent to Machiavelli and the world for which he was writing. What Machiavelli says is this—'I put him forward, as a model for such as climb to power by good fortune and the help of others. He did everything that a long-headed and capable man could do, who desires to strike root. I will show you how broad were the foundations that he laid for the fabric of his future power. I do not know what better lessons I could teach a new prince (*i.e.* an usurper) than his example. True, what he did failed in the end; that was due to the extreme malignity of fortune.'

* *Hist. of Rome*, iv. x. vol. iii. 380-91 (Eng. Trans.).

† E.g. Scherer, *Études Crit.* vi. 102, etc.

He makes no hero of him, except as a type of character well fitted for a given task.

Machiavelli knew him at close quarters.* He was sent on a mission to Borgia in the crisis of his fortunes, and he thought that he discerned in Cæsar those very qualities of action, force, combat, calculation, resolution, that the weakness of the age required. Machiavelli was in his train when terrible things were done. Cæsar was close, solitary, secret, quick. When any business is on foot, said Machiavelli, he knows nothing of rest or weariness or risk. He no sooner reached a place, than you heard that he had left it. He was loved by his troopers, for though he meted stern punishment for an offence against discipline, he was liberal in pay and put little restraint on freedom. Though no talker, yet when he had to make a case he was so pressing and fluent, that it was hard to find an answer. He was a great judge of occasion. Bold, crafty, resolute, deep, and above all well known never to forget or forgive an injury, he fascinated men with the terror of the basilisk. His firm maxim was to seek order by giving his new subjects a good and firm government, including a civil tribunal with a just president. Remiro was his first governor in the Romagna. It is uncertain how Remiro incurred his master's displeasure, but one morning Machiavelli walked out into the market-place at Cesena, and saw Remiro, as he puts

* See Tommasini, i. 242-65; Villari, Bk. I. ch. v., i. 392. For M.'s picture of the Italian princes, see *Arte della Guerra*, Bk. vii.

it, in two pieces, his head on a lance, and his body still covered with his fine clothes, resting on a block with a blood-stained axe by the side of it. His captains, beginning to penetrate Cæsar's designs, and fearing that he would seize their petty dominions one by one — like the leaves of an artichoke, as he said — revolted. Undaunted, he gathered new forces. Fresh bands of mercenaries flocked to the banners of a chief who had money, skill, and a happy star. The conspirators were no match for him in swiftness, activity, or resource; they allowed him to sow the seeds of disunion; he duped them into making a convention with him, which they had little thought of keeping. Everybody who knew his revengeful and implacable spirit was sure that the conspirators were doomed. When Machiavelli came near one of them he felt, he says, the deadly odour of a corpse. With many arts, the duke got them to meet him at Sinigaglia. He received their greetings cordially, pressed their hands, and gave them the accolade. They all rode into the town together, talking of military things. Cæsar courteously invited them to enter the palace, then he quitted them and they were forthwith seized. 'I doubt if they will be alive to-morrow morning,' the Florentine secretary wrote without emotion to his government. They went through some form of trial, before daybreak two of them were strangled, and two others shared the same fate as soon as Cæsar was sure that the Pope

had carried out his plans for making away by poison with the Cardinal who headed the rebellious faction at Rome.

Let us pause for a moment. One of the victims of Sinigaglia was Oliverotto da Fermo. His story is told in the eighth chapter of the *Prince*. He had been brought up from childhood by an uncle; he went out into the world to learn military service; in course of time, one day he wrote to his uncle at Fermo that he should like once more to see him and his paternal city, and, by way of showing his good compatriots that he had won some honour in his life, he proposed to bring a hundred horsemen in his company. He came, and was honourably received. He invited his uncle and the chief men of Fermo to a feast, and when the feast was over, his soldiers sprang upon the guests and slew them all, and Oliverotto became the tyrant of the place. We may at any rate forgive Cæsar for making sure work of Oliverotto a year later. When his last hour came, he struggled to drive his dagger into the man with the cord. Here indeed were lions, foxes, catamomnts.

This is obviously the key to Machiavelli's admiration for Borgia's policy. The men were all bandits together. Romagna is not and never was, said Dante two hundred years before, without war in the hearts of her tyrants (*Inf.* xxvii. 37). So it was now. It was full, says Machiavelli, of those who are called gentlemen, who live in idleness and

abundance on the revenues of their estates, without any care of cultivating them, or of incurring any of the fatigue of getting a living; such men are pernicious anywhere, most of all when they are lords of castles, and have subjects under obedience to them. These lords, before the Pope and his terrible son took them in hand, were poor, yet had a mind to live as if they were rich, and so there was nothing for it but rapine, extortion, and all iniquity. Whether Cæsar and the Pope had wider designs than the reduction of these oppressors to order, we can never know. Machiavelli and most contemporaries thought that they had, but the various historians of to-day differ. Probably the contemporaries knew best, but nothing can matter less.

We may as well finish Cæsar's story, because we never know until a man's end, whether the play has been tragedy or comedy. He seemed to be lord of the ascendant, when in the summer after the transaction of Sinigaglia (1503) the Pope and he were one evening both stricken with malarious fever at Rome. There was talk of poison, but the better opinion seems to be that this is fable.¹⁷ Alexander VI. died; Cæsar in the prime of his young man's strength, made a better fight for it, but when he at last recovered, his star had set. Machiavelli saw him and felt that Fortune this time had got the better of *virtù*. His subjects in the Romagna stood by him for a time, and then

tyranny and disorder came back. The new Pope, Julius II., was not his friend ; for though Cæsar had made the Spanish cardinals support his election, Julius had some old scores to pay, and as Machiavelli profoundly remarked, anybody who supposes that new services bring great people to forget old injuries, makes a dire mistake. So Cæsar found his way to Naples, with a safe-conduct from Gonsalvo, the Great Captain. He reaped as he had sown. Once he had said, 'It is well to cheat those who have been masters in treachery.' He now felt the force of his maxim. At Naples he was cordially received by Gonsalvo, dined often at his table, talked over all his plans, and suddenly one night as he was about to pass the postern, in spite of the safe-conduct an officer demanded his sword in the name of the King of Aragon.* To Spain he was sent. For some three years he went through strange and obscure adventures, fighting fortune with the aid of his indwelling demon to the very last. He was struck down in a fight at Viana in Navarre (1507), after a furious resistance ; was stripped of his fine armour by men who did not know who he was ; and his body was left naked, bloody, and riddled with wounds, on the ground. He was only thirty-one. His father, who was quite as desperate an evil-doer, died in his bed at seventy-two. So history cannot safely draw a moral.¹⁸

* Prescott, *Hist. Ferd. and Isabella*, ii. p. 498.

From this digression let us return to mark some of the problems that Machiavelli raises, noting as we pass, how besides their profound effect upon active principles of statesmanship and progress, they lie at the very root of historic judgment on conspicuous men and memorable movements in bygone times. In one sense we are shocked by his maxims in proportion to our forgetfulness of history. There have been, it is said, only two perfect princees in the world—Marcus Aurelius and Louis IX. of France. If you add to princees, even presidents and prime ministers, the percentage might still be low. Among the canonised saints of the Roman Church there have only been a dozen kings in eight centuries, and no more than four popes in the same period. So hard has it been ‘to govern the world by paternosters.’¹⁹ It is well to take care lest in blaming Machiavelli for openly prescribing hypocrisy, men do not slip unperceived into something like hypocrisy of their own.

Take the subordination of religious creed to policy. In the age that immediately followed Machiavelli, three commanding figures stand out, and are cherished in the memories of men—William the Silent, Henry of Navarre, and Elizabeth of England. It needs no peevish or pharisaic memory to trace even in these imposing personalities some

of the lineaments of Machiavelli's hated and scandalous picture. William the Silent changed from Lutheran to Catholic, then back to Lutheran, and then again from Lutheran to Calvinist. His numerous children were sometimes baptized in one of the three communions, sometimes in another, just as political convenience served. Henry of Navarre abjured his Huguenot faith, then he returned to it, then he abjured it again. Our great Elizabeth, of famous memory, notoriously walked in tortuous and slippery paths. Again, the most dolorous chapter in all history is that which recounts how men and women were burned, hanged, shot, and cruelly tormented, for heresy ; and there is a considerable body of authors, who through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used against heretics Machiavelli's arguments for making short work with rebels, and asked with logical force why their reason of Church was not just as good as his reason of State.²⁰ What is the real difference between the practices tolerated in the *Prince* for the self-preservation of a secular State, and all the abominations perpetrated in the name and for the sake of religious unity ? Again, how many of the wars of faith, from Monophysite, Arian, Iconoclast, downwards, have been at bottom far less concerned with opinion than with conflicts of race, nationality, property, and policy, and have been conducted on maxims of purely secular expediency ?

Frederick the Great is the hero of the most

picturesque of modern English historians. That strong ruler, as we all know, took it into his head to write a refutation of the *Prince*. 'Sir,' said Voltaire, 'I believe the very first advice that Machiavelli would have given to a disciple, would have been that he should begin by writing a refutation of his book.' Carlyle contemptuously regrets that his hero should have taken any trouble about the Italian's 'perverse little book' and its incredible sophistries; pity he was not refuted by a kick from old Frederick William's jackboot; he deserved no more. Thus Carlyle does not let us forget that nobody so quickly turns cynic as your high-flying transcendentalist, just as nobody takes wickedness so easily as the Antinomian who holds the highest doctrine about the incorruptibility of man's spiritual nature. The plain truth is that Frederick, alike on his good side and his bad side, alike as the wise law-maker, the thrifty steward, the capable soldier, and as the robber of Silesia, and a leading accomplice, if not the inspirer, of the partition of Poland, was the aptest of all modern types of the perverse book.²¹ It was reserved for the following century to see even that type depraved and distorted by the mighty descendant of a fugitive family from Tuscany, who found their way to Corsica about the time of Machiavelli's death.²²

The most imposing incarnation of the doctrine that reason of State covers all, is Napoleon. Tacitus, said Napoleon, writes romances; Gibbon is

no better than a man of sounding words; Machiavelli is the only one of them worth reading. No wonder that he thought so. All those maxims that have most scandalised mankind in the Italian writer of the sixteenth century, were the daily bread of the Italian soldier who planted his iron heel on the neck of Europe in the nineteenth. Yet Machiavelli at least sets decent limits and conditions. The ruler may under compulsion be driven to set at nought pity, humanity, faith, religion, for the sake of the State; but though he should know how to enter upon evil when compelled, he should never turn from what is good when he can avoid it. Napoleon sacrificed pity, humanity, faith, and public law, less for the sake of the State than to satisfy an exorbitant passion for personal domination. Napoleon, Charles ix., the Committee of Public Safety, would all have justified themselves by reason of State, and the Bartholomew massacre, the September massacres, and the murder of the Due d'Enghien, only show what reason of State may come to in any age, in the hands of practical politicians with a knife in their grasp.²³

Turn from the Absolutist camp to the Republican. Mazzini is in some respects the loftiest moral genius of the century, and he said that though he did not approve the theory of the dagger, nay he deplored it, yet he had not the heart to curse the fact of the dagger. 'When a man,' he says, 'seeks by every possible artifice to betray old friends to the police

of the Foreign Ruler, and then somebody arises and slays the Judas in broad daylight in the public streets—I have not the courage to cast the first stone at one who thus takes upon himself to represent social justice and hatred of tyranny.*

Even in modern democracy, many a secret and ugly spring works under decorous mechanism, and recalls Machiavelli's precept to keep the name and take away the thing. Salvagnoli, minister for religion and public instruction in a liberal government of modern Italy, laid it down broadly to the scandal, real or affected, of reactionary opponents, *Colla verità non si governa*. What shall we say of two great rival Powers, each professing with no little sincerity its earnest desire to spread all the boons of civilisation, yet adjusting their own quarrel by solemn bargain and mutual compact that binds down some weak buffer-state in backwardness and barbarism? Yet such inconsistency between practice and profession may be detected in the newspaper telegrams any month by a reader who keeps his eye upon the right quarter. Is our general standard really so far removed at last from Sir Walter Ralegh's description, which has a Machiavellian twang about it,—‘*Know ye not*, said Ahab, *that Ramoth Gilead is ours?*’ He knew this before, and was quiet enough, till opinion of his forces made him look unto his right. Broken titles to kingdoms or provinces, maintenance of friends and

* *Life and Writings of Mazzini* (ed. 1891), vi. 275-6.

partisans, pretended wrongs, and indeed whatsoever it pleaseth him to allege, that thinks his own sword sharpest.' An eminent man endowed with remarkable compass of mind, not many years ago a professor in this university, imagined a modern writer with the unflinching perspicacity of Machiavelli, analysing the party leader as the Italian analysed the tyrant or the prince.²⁴ Such a writer, he said, would find that the party leader, though possessed of every sort of private virtue, yet is debarred by his position from the full practice of the great virtues of veracity, justice, and moral intrepidity; he can seldom tell the full truth; can never be fair to anybody but his followers and his associates; can rarely be bold except in the interests of his faction. This hint of Maine's is ingenious and may perhaps be salutary, but we must not overdo it. Party government is not the Reign of the Saints, but we should be in no hurry to let the misgivings of political valetudinarianism persuade us that there is not at least as good a stock of veracity, justice, and moral intrepidity inside the world of parliaments or congress, as there is in the world without. But these three or four historic instances may serve to illustrate the *ἀπορία* and awkward points that Machiavelli's writings have propounded for men capable of political reflection in Europe, for many generations past.

If one were to try to put the case for the Machia-

vellian philosophy in a modern way, it would, I suppose, be something of this kind:—Nature does not work by moral rules. Nature, 'red in tooth and claw,' does by system all that good men by system avoid. Is not the whole universe of sentient being haunted all day and all night long by the haggard shapes of Hunger, Cruelty, Force, Fear? War again is not conducted by moral rules. To declare war is to suspend not merely *habeas corpus* but the Ten Commandments, and some other good commandments besides. A military manual, by an illustrious hand of our own day, warns us: 'As a nation we are brought up to feel it a disgrace even to succeed by falsehood. We keep hammering along with the conviction that honesty is the best policy, and that truth always wins in the long run. These sentiments do well for a copy-book, but a man who acts upon them had better sheath his sword for ever.' This, by the way, may be one reason among others why we should keep the sword sheathed as long as we can.

Why should the ruler of a State be bound by a moral code from which the soldier is free? Why should not he have the benefit of what has been called the evolutionary beatitude,—Blessed are the strong, for they shall prey on the weak? Right and wrong, cause and effect,—are they not two sides of one question? Has it not been well said that 'morality is the nature of things'? We must include in the computation the whole sum of

consequences, and consider acts of State as worked out to their furthest results. Bishop Butler tells you that we cannot give the whole account of any one single thing whatever,—not of all its causes, its ends, its necessary adjuncts. In short, means and end are only one transaction. You must regard policy as a whole. The ruler as an individual is, like other men, no more than the generation of leaves, fleeting, a shadow, a dream. But the State lives on after he shall have vanished. He is a trustee for times to come. He is not shaping his own life only; he guides the distant fortunes of a nation. Leaves fall, the tree stands.

Such, I take it, is the defence of reason of State, of the worship of nation and empire. Everything that policy requires, justice sanctions. Success is the test. There are no crimes in polities, only blunders. ‘The man of action is essentially conscienceless’ (Goethe). ‘Praised be those,’ said one, in words much applauded by Machiavelli, ‘who love their country rather than the safety of their souls.’ ‘Let us be Venetians first,’ said Father Paul, ‘and Christians after.’

We see now the deep questions that lie behind these sophistries, and all the alarming propositions in which they close. How are we to decide the constant question in national concerns, when and whether one duty overrules another that points the contrary way? It is easy to assert that the authority of moral law is paramount, but who denies that

cases may arise of disputable and conflicting moral obligations? Do you condemn Prussia for violating in 1813 the treaties imposed by Napoleon after Jena? Does morality apply only to end and not to means? Is the State means or end? What does it really exist for? For the sake of the individual, his moral and material well-being, or is he mere cog or pinion in the vast thundering machine? How far is it true that citizenship dominates all other relations and duties, and is the most important of them? Are we to test the true civilisation of a State by anything else than the predominance of justice, right, equality, in its laws, its institutions, its relations to neighbours? Is one of the most important aspects of national policy its reaction upon the character of the nation itself, and can States enter on courses of duplicity and selfish violence, without paying the penalty in national demoralisation? What are we to think of such sayings as d'Alembert's motto for a virtuous man, 'I prefer my family to myself, my country to my family, and humanity to my country'? Is this the true order of honourable attachments for a man of self-respect and conscience? To Machiavelli all these questions would have been futile. Yet the world, in spite of a thousand mischances, and at tortoise-pace, has steadily moved away from him and his Romans.

The modern conception of a State has long made it a moral person, capable of right and wrong, just

as are the individuals composing it. Civilisation is taken to advance, exactly in proportion as communities leave behind them the violences of external nature, and the unspeakable brutalities of man in a state of war. The usages of war are constantly undergoing mitigation. The inviolability of treaties received rude shocks between the first Napoleon and Prince Bismarck. ‘You are always talking to me of principles,’ said Alexander I. to Talleyrand, ‘as if your public law were anything to me. I do not know what it means. What do you suppose that all your parchments and your treaties signify to me?’ Yet the sanctity of national faith has gained ground rather than lost, and even naked invasions of it seek the decorum of a diplomatic fig-leaf. Though it is said even now not to be wholly purged of lying, fraud, and duplicity, diplomacy still is conscious of having a character to keep up for truth and plain dealing, so far as circumstances allow. Such conferences, again, as those at Berlin and Brussels in our own day, imperfectly as they have worked, mark the recognition of duty towards inferior races. All these improvements in the character of nations were in the minds of the best men in Machiavelli’s day. Reason of State has always been a plea for impeding and resisting them. Las Casas and other churchmen, Machiavelli’s contemporaries, fought nobly at the Spanish court against the inhuman treatment of Indians in the New World, and they were defeated by argu-

ments that read like maxims from the *Prince*.²⁵ Grotius had forerunners in his powerful contribution towards assuaging the abominations of war, but both letter and spirit in Machiavelli made all the other way.²⁶ Times have come and gone since Machiavelli wrote down his deep truths, but in the great cycles of human change he can have no place among the strong thinkers, the orators, the writers, who have elevated the conception of the State, have humanised the methods and maxims of government, have raised citizenship to be 'a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection.' He turned to the past, just as scholars, architects, sculptors, turned to it; but the idea of reconstructing a society that had once been saturated with the great ruling conceptions of the thirteenth century—as seen and symbolised in Dante, for example—by trying to awaken the social energy of ancient Rome, was just as much of an anachronism as Julian the Apostate. 'Our religion,' said Machiavelli of Christianity, 'has glorified men of humble and meditative life, and not men of action. It has planted the chief good in lowliness and contempt of mundane things; paganism placed it in highmindedness, in bodily force, in all the other things that make men strong. If our religion calls for strength in us, it is for strength to suffer rather than to do. This seems to have rendered the world weak.' This 'discarding the presuppositions of Christianity,' as it has been well described, marks with exactitude the

place of Machiavelli in the development of modern European thought. The *Prince*—the most direct, concentrated, and unflinching contribution ever made to the secularisation of polities—brings into a full light, never before shed upon it, the awful manicheism of human history, the fierce and unending collision of type, ideal, standard, and endeavour.

Machiavelli has been supposed to put aside the question of right and wrong, just as the political economist or the analytical jurist used to do. Truly has it been said that the practical value of all sciences founded on abstractions, depends on the relative importance of the elements rejected and the elements retained in the process of abstraction. The view that he rejected moral elements of government for a scientific purpose and as a hypothetical postulate, seems highly doubtful. Is he not more intelligible, if we take him as following up the divorce of politics from theology, by a divorce from ethics also? He was laying down certain maxims of government as an art; the end of that art is the security and permanence of the ruling power; and the fundamental principle from which he silently started, without shadow of doubt or misgiving as to its soundness, was that the application of moral standards to this business, is as little to the point as it would be in the navigation of a ship.

The effect was fatal even for his own purpose, for what he put aside, whether for the sake of

argument or because he thought them in substance irrelevant, were nothing less than the living forces by which societies subsist and governments are strong. A remarkable illustration occurred in his own century. Three or four years before all this on secular and ecclesiastical princedoms was written, John Calvin was born (1509). With a union of fervid religious instinct and profound political genius, almost unexampled in European history, Calvin did in fact what Machiavelli tried to do on paper; he actually created a self-governed state, ruled it, defended it, maintained it, and made that little corner of Europe both the centre of a movement that shook France, England, Scotland, America, for long days to come, and at the same time he set up a bulwark against all the forces of Spanish and Roman reaction in the pressing struggles of his own immediate day. In one sense, Florence, Geneva, Holland, hold as high a place as the greatest States of Europe in the development of modern civilisation; but anybody with a turn for ingenious or idle speculation might ask himself whether, if the influence of Florence on European culture had never existed, the loss to mankind would have been as deep as if the little republic of Geneva had been wiped out by the dukes of Savoy. The unarmed prophet, said Machiavelli, thinking of Savonarola, is always sure to be destroyed, and his institutions must come to nought. If Machiavelli had been at Jerusalem two thousand

years ago, he might have found nobody of any importance in his eyes, save Pontius Pilate and the Roman legionaries. He forgot the potent arms of moral force, and it was with these that, in the main, Calvin fought his victorious battle. We need not, however, forget that Calvin never scrupled to act on some of these Italian maxims that have been counted most hateful. He was as ready to resort to carnal weapons as other people. In spite of all the sophistries of sectarian apologists, Calvin's vindictive persecution of political opponents, and his share in the crime of burning Servetus, can only be justified on principles that are much the same as, and certainly not any better than, those prescribed for the tyrant in the *Prince*. Still the republic of Geneva was a triumph of moral force. So was the daughter system in Scotland. It is true that tyrannical theocracy does not in either case by any means escape the familiar reproaches addressed by history to Jesuits and Inquisitors.

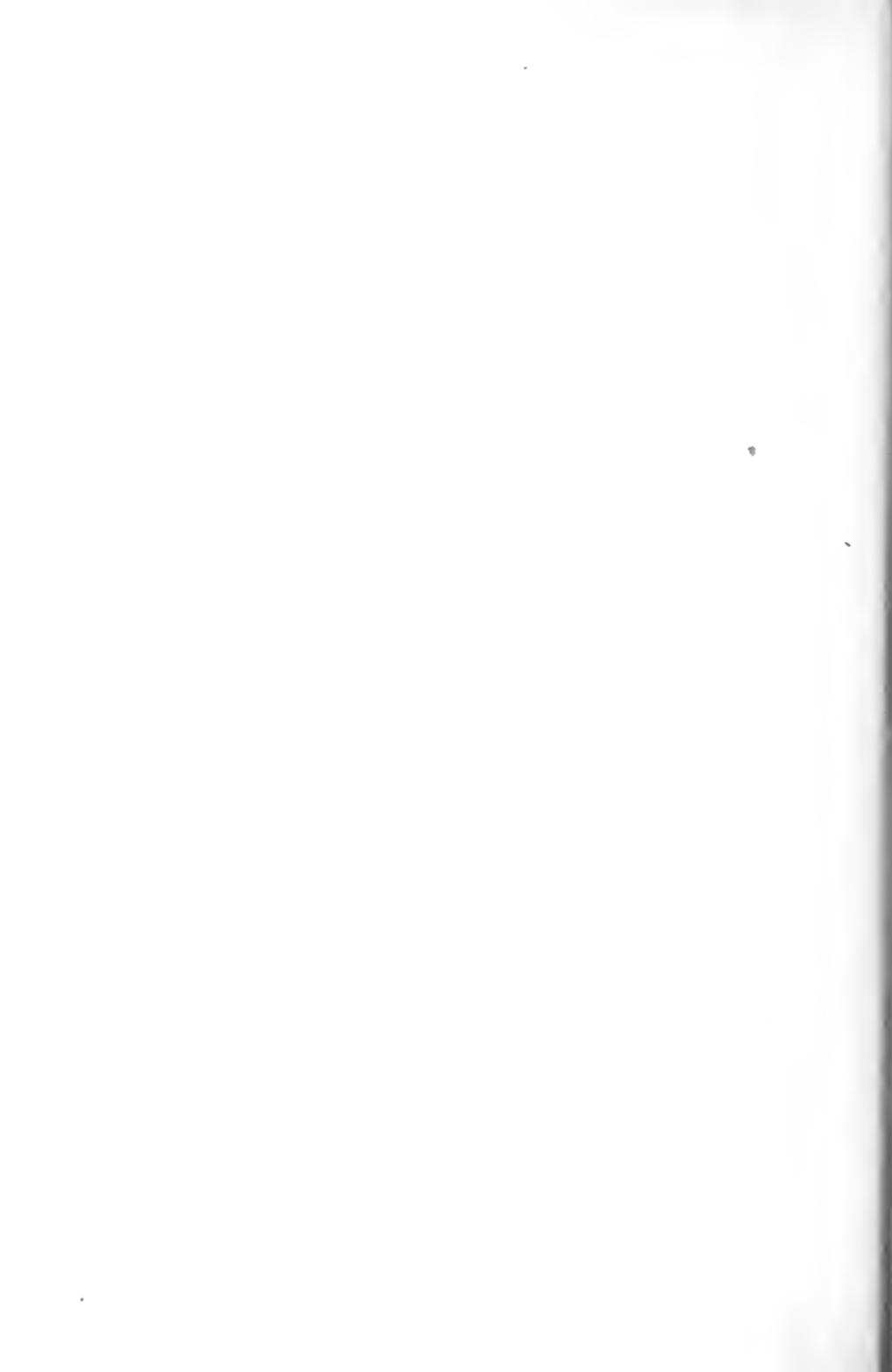
In Italy Savonarola had attempted a similar achievement. It was the last effort to reconcile the spirit of the new age to the old faith, but Italy was for a second time in her history in the desperate case of being able to endure *nec vitia nec remedia*, neither ills nor cure. In a curious passage (*Disc. iii. 1*), Machiavelli describes how Dominic and Francis in older days kindled afresh an expiring flame. He may have perceived that for Italy in this direction all was by his time over.

The sixteenth century in Italy in some respects resembles the eighteenth in France. In both, old faiths were assailed and new lamps were kindled. But the eighteenth century was a time of belief in the better elements of mankind. An illusion, you may say. Was it a worse illusion than disbelief in mankind? Machiavelli and his school saw only cunning, jealousy, perfidy, ingratitude, dupery; and yet on such a foundation as this they dreamed that they could build. What idealist or doctrinaire ever fell into a stranger error? Surrounded by the ruins of Italian nationality, says a writer of genius, 'Machiavelli organises the abstract theory of the country with all the energy of the Committee of Public Safety, supported on the passion of twenty-five millions of Frenchmen. He carries in him the genius of the Convention. His theories strike like acts' (Quinet). Yet after all has been said, energy as an abstract theory is no better than a bubble.

'The age of Machiavelli,' it has been said, 'was something like ours, in being one of religious eclipse, attended by failure of the traditional foundation of morality. A domination of self-interest without regard for moral restriction was the result' (Goldwin Smith). We may hope to escape this capital disaster. Yet it is true to say that Machiavelli represents certain living forces in our actual world; that Science, with its survival of the fittest, unconsciously lends him illegitimate aid; that 'he is not a vanishing type, but a con-

stant and contemporary influence' (Acton). This is because energy, force, will, violence, still keep alive in the world their resistance to the control of justice and conscience, humanity and right. In so far as he represents one side in that unending struggle, and suggests one set of considerations about it, he retains a place in the literature of modern political systems and of Western morals.

GUICCIARDINI



GUICCIARDINI

In a short piece lately written upon Machiavelli, I mentioned how Cavour used to say that the author of the *Prince* had not so good a grasp of the realities of public things as Guicciardini, his contemporary and friend. Here was a man, said Cavour, who really knew affairs, and knew them far better than Machiavelli. To most even decently well-read persons who have had no special occasion to look into his pages, he is little more than a name, known only by the old jest of an enemy, transferred to the dazzling page of Macaulay, that a certain criminal in Italy was suffered to make his choice between Guicciardini and the galleys; he chose the History, but the war of Pisa was too much for him; he changed his mind, and went to the oar. Yet the writer of the history thus despatched for the inexpiable sin of dulness, just as if life and circumstance were never dull, is one of the acutest, weightiest, most vigorous and observant of European publicists in ancient times or modern.

Cavour is not the only personage of authority who has given Guicciardini a place among great names. Bolingbroke, for instance, audaciously declares

that he does not scruple to prefer him in every respect to Thucydides. Thiers calls him one of the most clear-sighted men that ever lived, and declares that his breadth of narrative, the vigour of his pencil, and his depth of judgment, rank his History among the finest monuments of the human mind. Macaulay, in his later days, said that he admired no historians much except Herodotus, Thucydides, and Tacitus, and perhaps in his own peculiar way Father Paul Sarpi : the historian of the Council of Trent he always placed first among the Italians; then came Davila, whose story of the battle of Ivry was worthy of Thucydides himself; next to Davila he put Guicciardini, and Machiavelli last. An accomplished critic in his own country calls their historic school one of the most original creations of the Italians of the Renaissance, and Guicciardini stands first within that school. An accomplished English critic calls him one of the most consummate historians of any nation or of any age. A German critic applauds the grasp and mastery with which he explains events, motives, plans, reasons for and against. Ranke describes his book as the foundation of all the later works upon the beginning of modern history, and as one of our great historical possessions.* Charles the Fifth knew Guicciardini

* Villari, *Machiavelli*, iii. 205; Symonds, *Renaissance, Age of Despots*, 230; Gaspari, *Italien. Lit. der Renaissancezeit*, ii. 391; Ranke, *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber* (1874), *Sämmtl. Werke*, xxxiv.

well. There is a story that when courtiers remonstrated at the long hours that he spent with the Italian while they were kept waiting, Charles replied: 'In a single instant I can create a hundred grandees of Spain; not in a hundred years could I make a Guicciardini.'

I

Born in 1482, he was a little younger than Machiavelli and Michelangelo, and he died in 1540. He was descended from a tolerably long line of respectable burghers, of whom he has left us a full account, including half a dozen vignettes that show in graphic style what manner of folk they were. They kept shops where they sold silk and other wares; they owned ships and were their own skippers; they went to the Levant and Flanders and wherever else in the narrower and simpler trade of that day money was to be picked up; and they filled at one time or another all the various public posts of secondary rank in Florence. A sort of family likeness is to be traced among them. The men were strong, good-looking, warm in temper yet cautious in polities, weighty, of good character according to the standard of time and place, and with a sharp eye to the main chance. The Guicciardini were not great people, but they were steady, well-to-do, respectable people, and the historian was proud of his stock. Two things in the

world, he told his descendants, he cared about — one, the perpetual exaltation of the city and its freedom; the other, ‘the glory of our house, not only for my life, but for always.’

It has been energetically said of ‘the sombre and sublime Italy’ of the sixteenth century, that life was a mortal combat, the house a fortress, the garment a cuirass, hospitality an ambush, the embrace a garotte, the proffered cup poison, the proffered hand a dagger-thrust.* This, however, was not all, and in truth this fierce melodrama never can be all. Here is Guicciardini’s vignette of his father, to whom he was to the end of his days deeply and tenderly attached: —

Peter was truly a wise man, and of as great judgment and insight as any man in Florence in his time; nobody had a better or a clearer conscience; he was a lover of his city and of the poor; and he never did a human creature the smallest wrong. For these things, as well as for the qualities of his house and his forefathers, he was from his youth upwards held in high esteem, and he carried himself in such a way that in brain and in weight there was no man in Florence to equal him. If only to his goodness and his prudence had been added a little more vivacity, he would have stood still higher. But either because nature made him so, or because it was due to the times, which were in truth strong times and strange, he went about his affairs with little boldness and much wariness; taking up few ventures, working at public things slowly and with great deliberation, never willing,

* *Saint-Victor, Anciens et Modernes*, p. 31.

save when necessity or conscience constrained him, to say outright in important matters what was his real mind and judgment. Though his carefulness not to put himself at the head of a party, or of novel schemes and undertakings, prevented his name from being on everybody's lips, yet it had this other effect, that in the midst of all the tumult and agitation that the city went through in his day, he always kept himself and his position out of reach of hurt. That was more than happened to anybody else of his degree, when all the other considerable people ran such risks in property or life. . . . These things made the city grieve sorely over his death, and all good men felt his loss, the people and citizens of every class—everybody knowing that a wise and good citizen was gone, and one from whom both in universal and particular no mischief could ever have come, but only good fruit and well-doing.*

Guicciardini was in important employment from 1512, when at the age of thirty he was sent to represent the Republic of Florence at the Court of Ferdinand of Aragon. He returned home in the following year. In 1515 he was appointed to meet Leo the Tenth on behalf of the Republic, and from 1516 to 1523 he was made papal officer in the Emilia. Then he was named the Pope's viceroy in the Romagna, and lieutenant-general in the papal army. He shared some of the responsibility for the disasters that are summed up in the Sack of Rome (1527), but this did not prevent his promotion, when the time came, to be the Pope's governor at

* *Op. Ined.* x. 90-1.

Bologna (1531). He did his work with energy, tact, and capacity, until at last the death of Clement the Seventh (1534) put an end to his employment in the papal service.

His life by this time 'became a series of expedients, in which he loses personal consideration, his reputation for honour, and at last his whole credit and power.'* Though always free from direct corruption, and according to his own account a believer rather in politic clemency than in rigour, yet when he was sent by the Pope in 1530 to punish the Florentines for their rising, he showed himself merciless and vindictive, and repaid the revolutionary party in their own coin for the fierce rancour with which, when they were uppermost, they had handled the friends of Clement the Seventh.† By conviction he was in favour of an oligarchy, and his private writings prove that he estimated the Medici and their tyranny at what they were worth. But neither fools nor wise, he said, 'can in the end resist that which has to be.' 'All states and cities are mortal; everything, either by its nature or by accident, comes to a close. Hence a citizen who finds himself watching the dissolution of his country, need not so much groan over this disgrace, as over his own lot. His country only suffers what in any case it was bound to suffer. The true unhappiness is that of the man who chances to have been born in an age when the

* Benoist's *Guichardin*, p. 101. † Varchi, *Stor. Fior.* Bk. xii.

moment of his country's doom has struck.' This has been called a sublime stoicism. It is perhaps nearer to that fatalism, not sublime, with which in times of political confusion men excuse a secret surrender to self-interest. An ancient traveller found on the Acrocorinthus a mysterious shrine dedicated to Necessity and Force. These two are potent divinities indeed, and well deserve a temple; still, sublime stoic is hardly the name for him who bows down humbly within their walls, and seeks to propitiate them in his own favour at any prie in burnt offerings.

In one of his *Reflections* Guicciardini inculcates the perilous doctrine that it is the duty of a good citizen to do his best to live on such terms with a tyrant, as to be able to counsel good courses and dissuade from bad ones. 'How disastrous,' he cries, 'would the Government of the Medici have been, if they had been surrounded only by fools and knaves.' Acting on this principle, which in various applications has been the undoing of many a better man in cabinets and parties since—say from Falkland and Colepeper in the seventeenth century down to *Prévost Paradol* in the nineteenth—Guicciardini became servant of the most odious of the Medici. Finally, he was the means of raising Cosimo to be head of the State. Cosimo was only eighteen, he was fond of pleasure, and Guicciardini took care that he should have a handsome income. When the sum was fixed, Guicciardini at the

council table, lowering his face and raising his eyebrows, said dryly, 'Twelve thousand golden florins are fine spending.' But craft is not confined to greybeards, and young Cosimo was no sooner secure, than he discarded his mentor. Guicciardini went off to his villa (1534); he was fifty-two; he had abundant material to his hand; he had ever been an indefatigable penman; and he now spent the six years of life that were left in the composition of his great work on the history of Italy. Clarendon was seven years older when he too in exile and disgrace 'betook himself to his books,' and with indomitable activity of mind and pen completed the famous story of his own time.

Guicciardini was reasonably free from the discouragement and dejection, with which satiety of life is apt to affect men's judgment and temper. He was nearing that period of his age, '*dove ciascum dovrebbe Calar le vele, e raccoglier le sarte*' — when every lofty soul, like the mariner drawing near the port, should lower sails and gather in the ropes. Though men are often spoiled by success in the world, still more are spoiled by failure. Guicciardini was wise enough to look to what he had done, rather than at what he had missed. What he seeks, and what he attains, is rather a reasoned fortitude than that serenity, that 'great lesson of suavity,' as Dante calls it, which brings a man to face his end without grief or bitterness. He did not pretend to like the falling of the curtain, but

he consoled himself by thinking for how many important parts he had been cast by Fortune, and how well he had played them all. He was without that morbid ambition, as it has been called, and a very morbid ambition it is, which pretends to treat all grief, anger, mortification, chagrin, as weaknesses to be ashamed of. He makes no foolish attempt to cure his wound either by a spurious rhetoric that places things out of perspective and proportion, or by a spurious philosophy that pretends to turn pain into pleasure by juggling with words as if they were things. Various are the attitudes of men towards the outside unseen divinity, — Fortune, Chance, Necessity, Force of Circumstance — when it overthrows them. Some defy, some whimper, some fall stunned, some break their hearts once for all, others silently obey the grim ordering of events and with courage gather up the shattered pieces. The ancient literature of consolation contains some famous pieces, from Seneca, the friend of Nero, down to Boethius, the friend of Theodoric.* If we would measure the differences of times and men, it is well worth while to turn to that grave and beautiful piece in our own literature, so full of enlightenment, liberality, wisdom, tenderness, and piety, where Bishop Burnet concludes his history. ‘I have,’ he says, ‘eonsidering my sphere, seen a great deal of all that is most shining and tempting

*See M. Martha’s *Consolations dans l’Antiquité* — a chapter in his admirable *Études Morales sur l’Antiquité*.

in this world: the pleasures of sense I did soon nauseate; intrigues of state and the conduct of affairs have something in them that is more specious, and I was for some years deeply immersed in these, though still with hopes of reforming the world, and of making mankind wiser and better; but I have found that which is crooked cannot be made straight.' And then he goes on his way to his devout and lofty moral. So at a moment when all his counsels had come to nought, when his patron, the Holy Father, was a prisoner in the castle of Saint Angelo, and Rome was suffering all the violence and horror of prolonged sack at the hands of ferocious Spaniard and barbaric German, Guicciardini tried his hand at self-consolation.*

Politely despatching with summary mention the comforting assurances of theologians and philosophers, as physic that no patient would voluntarily choose to take, 'I will speak to thee,' he says to himself, 'in a lower key than all that, and more according to the nature of men and the world.' It comes to this after all. Human enterprises are ever apt to miscarry; he knew this when he embarked upon the voyage; the wreck was no special fault of his, for popes, kings, and emperors were the principals, and he no more than an instrument; his arguments for the war against the Emperor may have been an error of judgment, but it is not fair to expect a man to carry into the council-

* September 1527. *Op. Inv. x.* 103-33.

chamber, besides merely human reasonings, the prognosticating judgments of astrologers and soothsayers; in fine, 'tis time mends all, and men will see that he was blameless. Such is the strain of his autobiographic meditation. Then he recovers the self-respect of which he is in search, by appeal to his past: 'Ask all the places where thou hast been, the peoples over whom thou hast been set to rule, the armies that have been under thy orders. They will own that thou art a man of talent, resolute in taking decisions, abundant in resource, expeditious in act.' Wholly free from the insincerities and inflations of the professing cynic, stoic, or anchorite, Guicciardini's consolation is rational and worth reading. Nevertheless at the end of it perhaps an impartial person would commend to statesmen in misfortune not all this argumentation, explanation, consolation, sophistication, but the simple concision of Thucydides — 'It befell me to be an exile from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis.' And no more.

In every age cases meet us where experience changes the idealist and the reformer, first to doubter, then to indifferent, next to pure egotist, at last to hard cynic. The process may be gradual, but it is apt to be implacable, and the fallen man one day awakes to find his sensibility gone, his moral pulse at a stand, and a once ardent soul burnt down to ashes. When the waking hour arrives, one man may still have grace enough to

go out and weep bitterly; another only mocks. There is no sign that Guicciardini ran through all these stages of the political Sceptic's Progress. He was man of the world from first to last. Dreams and visions such as make for some the charmed part of life, were never anything to him. In a series of extraordinarily suggestive considerations on Machiavelli's *Discorsi*,* he gravely exposes that vivid writer's excess of severity in logic, excess of colour in his ideals, excess of eloquence in description; and teaches us the lesson of which the publicist in all times seems to stand so much in need, that in polities, your proposition should be guarded by temperance, reserve, common sense, and all the qualifications of practice. This prudence did not at all spring in Guicciardini from the trait noted by Aristotle in elderly men,—a fondness for only saying 'I think,' never 'I know'; † and for larding their argument with 'perhaps' and 'possibly.' Experience had taught him that government is the most complex of subjects, and general maxims about it the most in need of caution. He had not even ambition of the ravening sort. He was not of those who must be Premier, President, Commander-in-Chief, or Admiral of the Fleet. Yet he had much honourable public spirit. 'Three things,' he said, 'I would willingly see before I die: a well-ordered republic in my native Florence; the barbarian invaders driven from Italy; the world

* *Op. Ined.* i.

† *Rhet.* ii. 13.

freed from the rascal priests.' These objects he honestly desired, but he did not much expect them, and he was not the man to make a fight for them. He had a passion for the transaction of public business, he wished to see it well done with a view to ends well ordered, and he had a strong capacity for it. We should in charity and sense remember that it is a natural infirmity, even of noble minds, to identify their own personality with the furtherance of the common good.

Guicciardini in fine was a grave, long-headed man of affairs, of a type well known in the public service of kings and peoples from his day to ours. He was sharply alive to the truth set out by Machiavelli, that the thing of importance in this world is not only to know one's self in a general way, but to have skill enough rightly to measure the forces of one's own mind and character with the forces and needs of the State. As much as that, to be sure, would have been heartily admitted by anybody in the Rogue's Camp, from Verres to Jonathan Wild. Apart from this original selfishness of the politic man in search of his career, times of great public travail tend to harden the heart; and the Florentine publicists all write like men with hardish hearts. They have none of the geniality of Commynes, none of the cheerful good humour of Bacon, none of the amiability of Montesquieu, none of that deep insight into life and character as a whole, which made La Bruyère and some

other Frenchmen of the seventeenth century, including more than one of their divines, so admirable and so fruitful. The same is true even of Paruta, the Venetian, who hated the Machiavellian school and all its works, and wrote some admirable things in his dialogue on the Perfection of the Political Life. Neither Venetian publicist nor Florentine, for instance, was capable of any such saying as that exquisite one of Bacon, that *the nobler a soul is, the more objects of compassion it hath*. Nothing of this kind was in their vein. They would have set down as mere mockery Pascal's celestially ordered hierarchy—Kings, captains, the rich, all the great men of the flesh, as lowest down in the scale of grandeur. Then the men of genius, with their empire, their conquests, and their lustre, with no need of outer carnal splendours. Third, above both these, the saints, inventing nothing, ruling no kingdom, but humble, patient, holy before God, terrible to demons,—this, the grandeur of wisdom, is invisible to the eyes of carnal and of intellectual greatness.* Savonarola, who stood for the same unworldly scheme of human things, was put to an ignoble death in 1498, and Guicciardini, then a boy of sixteen, may have watched the flames. In his dialogues on the government of Florence,† Guicciardini makes one interlocutor say to another:—‘This advice may seem cruel and unconscientious,

* *Pensées*, xvii. 1 (ed. Havet), vol. iii. 230 (*Grands Écrivains*).

† *Op. Ined.* ii.

and so in truth it is. That is why thy great-grand-father Gino wrote in his *Ricordi* that the Council of Ten for War should consist of such as loved their country better than their souls, because *it is not possible to rule governments and states according to the precepts of Christian law.*' It is when we compare the school of Machiavel and Guicciardini with Dante, that we discern the two widely parted currents into which the main stream of political thought and sentiment in Europe was now formally dividing itself.

II

Guicciardini interests us somewhat as a political theorist about constitutions and the like; he interests us deeply as a historian; he interests us most of all as a shrewd observer of men, and a keen explorer of the secrets of managing them. Of the first of these three aspects of him we shall say nothing, except that his discussion of the government of Florence handles the everlasting question whether the rule by one, by a few, or by many, is the best, with extraordinary acuteness and vigour. It is too long, and it is all the longer for being in the form of dialogue. This was a favourite device of the century. To some of us, the most tiresome dissertation is not more afflictive than the sprightliest, courtliest, demurest, or archest of all these polemical dialogues. Plato is of course the grand exception, as on a lower plane is Cicero's brilliant and skilful dialogue on the

Orator. But if men could be quite honest about Olympian names, perhaps a fraction even of Plato would fall under the same remark. One critic, and a French critic, strange to say, is reminded by our Italian's *Reggimento di Firenze*, in respect of elegance and grace of the opening of the *Phædrus*. This belongs to the disputable region of taste. A more important and less questionable point is that in its arguments and considerations on the merits, difficulties, and dangers of popular government, and in the light it sheds on our actual problem of the choice between power concentrated and power checked and counterbalanced, Guicciardini's dialogue is as modern as if it had been written yesterday, and it has even been enthusiastically described as one of the strongest and most vivid in the history of political writing.* Or why say modern? As if the insoluble theme of the respective merits of government by many, by a few, by one, had not been opened by the seven Persian conspirators in old Herodotus (iii. 80), worshipful father of history, five centuries before Christ.

Far more interesting, alike as historic document, and as a kind of literature in which the world is not any too well off, are the *Ricordi* or Civil and Political Counsels. These are a body of aphorisms or reflections on political wisdom, and the arts of the Politic Man; and it is mainly on their account that the ordinary reader of to-day will think it

* Janet, *Hist. de la Science Politique*, i. 546.

worth while to take a volume of Guicciardini down from his shelf. They did not appear in a full and authentic shape until the year 1857. Some of them are scattered through the *History of Italy* and other of the author's writings, and these judicious sentences were collected from the *History* and published apart before the end of the sixteenth century. Guicciardini evidently took great pains in pointing and polishing them, though it is doubtful whether he ever meant the whole of them for the public eye. He was the most circumspect of men, and very unlikely to be willing to hand over to the profane crowd all the secrets of empire and all the wisdom of the *domus Socratica* of Rome and Florence.* Many of the four hundred are repetitions, but when due deduction is made for these, a large body of observation and admonition is left that both instructs us about standards of judicious conduct in the sixteenth century, and suggests some sidelights for the twentieth.

We must not expect any consideration of those deeper elements and aspirations in human nature that have led some to groan over the life of mankind as a hideous tragedy of waste and wrong, and others to laugh at history as 'a comedy in a hundred acts.' The stress of existence in unfortunate Italy

*The *Ricordi* are in the first of the ten volumes of *Opere Inedite*. They have been rendered into English by Mr. Thompson (Kegan Paul, 1890), the translator of Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses*. See also Dean Church's *Occasional Papers*, vol i.

was too desperate. ‘In the sixteenth century, they analysed much less than they acted, in war, polities, religion. Everything was done by *coups de main* and *coups d'état*.’* Be all this as it may, we must admit of Guicciardini’s Counsels and Reflections, sage as they are on their own level and within their own limits, that they do not spring from a rich soil, do not seem as if they had grown in a nourishing air, have not the full savour of fruits ripened in the sun. He was sheer politician, and the cases are rare where polities do not rather contract than expand the range of human interest and feeling, do not check rather than promote the sap and juice of a living feeundity.

Bacon in the famous eighth book of the *De Augmentis*, that masterpiece of the secondary arts of wisdom of life, sets down some heads or passages of what he calls the *Architect of Fortune or the Knowledge of Advancement in Life*. The things necessary for the acquisition of fortune, he says, and the formation of the truly Politie Man, are a part of human knowledge which he reports as deficient, and we may doubt whether anybody has done much to advance it since. ‘Not, however, that Learning admires or esteems this architecture otherwise than as an inferior work. For no man’s fortune can be an end worthy of the gift of being, that has been given him by God; and often the worthiest men abandon their fortunes willingly,

* Benoist, p. 127.

that they may have leisure for higher pursuits. But, nevertheless, fortune as an instrument of virtue and merit deserves its own speculation and doctrine.' This limitation would have been too hard for Guicciardini. The architecture of fortune in men meddling with government, went as high as his vision could carry.

The critic goes uncharitably far when he says that Guicciardini's *Reflections* are Italian corruption reduced to a code, and raised into a rule of life.* But life to him was no more than what Bacon calls an 'incessant, restless, and as it were sabbathless chase of fortune'—a game to be keenly played with the world's dice-box. From the first he resolved to master all its arts, expedients, and rules, without prejudice to a little silent cozening at a pinch. For if Fortune is free to palm an ace or eog a die, why may not we try to make the match more equal? The Italian's *Politie Man* has none of Bacon's large and open brow, his wide horizons, his magisterial ease and bonhomie. Nor had he more than half mastered the distinction set out by Bacon in one of those pithy and sapid comments on Solomon's Proverbs, which are worth many long hours of sermon-preaching. 'A wise man,' said King Solomon, 'looketh well to his ways, but a fool turneth to deeit.' On which, Bacon:—

There are two kinds of wisdom, the one true and sound, the other degenerate and false, which Solomon does not

* De Sanetis, *Lett. Ital.* ii. 115.

hesitate to term folly. He who applies himself to the former takes heed of his own ways, foreseeing dangers, preparing remedies, employing the assistance of the good, guarding himself against the wicked, cautious in entering upon a work, not unprepared for a retreat, watchful to seize opportunities, strenuous to remove impediments, and attending to many other things which concern the government of his own actions and proceedings. But the other kind is entirely made up of deceits and cunning tricks, laying all its hopes in the circumventing of others, and moulding them to its pleasure ; which kind the proverb denounces as being not only dishonest, but also foolish.

Prudential counsels by code and system can hardly ever be in the highest sense attractive. A modern who in his studies came across the private notebooks and reflections of Mazarin (one of the two great Italians who have governed France, and deeply marked by the characteristics of Italian genius a century before his time) is driven to say of them that all this political cookery rather takes away one's appetite, and indeed would make one sick if only one did not remember that *everything has its kitchen side*.* Abhor all the pretensions of the Pharisee as heartily as ever we will, there is something repulsive in the thought of a man starting every day with a dose of *Ricordi*, and coming forth from his chamber having given all the freshness of the morning hour to sharpening his rapier or charging his pistols for the daily duel with for-

* *Palais Mazarin*, par le Comte de Laborde, ii. 124.

tune and his fellow-creatures. The world has more liking for one who practises the pregnant maxim, *Sekest thou great things, seek them not*; and it often looks as if this lofty heedlessness, in spite of what Guicciardini may say, were as politic as it is certainly wise in wisdom's sense.

It may move a friendly smile to notice that nobody has so many biting things to say about the selfishness and duplicity of mankind, as one who has made it the whole business of his life to use mankind as the ladder for his own advancement. Nobody in all the world is so ready to play wounded benefactor as the self-seeker out of luck. Guicciardini is less unkind to his fellow-mortals, man for man, than observers of his stamp usually are. He is not blind to the weaknesses of our poor species as a whole; but he sees them redeemed by the worth of the elect. Like Goethe, he would say 'that in their faults one recognises Mankind, in excellencies the Individual; shortcomings and the chances and changes of life have we all in common, but virtues belong to each man in particular.' 'Do not be afraid of benefiting men,' says Guicciardini, 'simply because you see ingratitude so common; for besides that a temper of kindness in itself, and without any other object, is a generous quality and in a way divine, you now and again find somebody exhibiting such gratitude as richly to make up for the ingratitude of all the rest.'

The worst of maxims, aphorisms, and the like,

from the sayings of Solomon and Jesus the son of Sirach downward, is that for every occasion in life or perplexity in conduct, there is a brace of them; and of the brace, one points one way and the other down a path exactly opposite. The fingerpost of experience has many arms at every crossroad. One observer tells the disciple that in politics perseverance always wins; another that men who take the greatest trouble to succeed, are those most sure to miss. To-day, the one essential seems to be boldness of conception; to-morrow, the man of detail is master of the hour. To-day the turn of things inclines a man to say that in politics nothing matters; to-morrow some other turn teaches him that in politics everything matters. The instructor in statecraft and the guide to the Politic Man must be Janus and look more ways than one, and to this demand Guicciardini was equal.

As an aristocrat by birth, by temper, and by observation, Guicciardini did not allow his general benevolence to make him a Friend of the People in the political sense of to-day. 'Who says people says in truth a foolish animal, full of a thousand errors, a thousand confusions, without taste, without discernment, without stability. They are like the waves of the sea, driven by the winds now here, now there, without rule, without coherency (140). Their vain opinions are as far from the truth as Ptolemy makes Spain from the Indies' (345). In the following century in his dungeon in the Castle

of Saint Elmo the valiant and unfortunate Campanella, in one of the sonnets with which he beguiled a whole weary generation of captivity, used similar figures, though on his lips such language was passionate remonstrance rather than contempt.* *Il popolo è una bestia*—

The people is a beast of muddy brain,
That knows not its own force and therefore stands,
Loaded with wood and stone.

The implication is the contradictory of Guicciardini's.

It is not merely the multitude on whose wisdom you cannot count. 'Said Messer Antonio of Venafro, and he said well—Place seven or eight clever men together, and they become so many fools. The reason is that when they do not agree, they are keener to argue than to decide' (112). You may see it any day in the case of doctors; when several are called in, they easily come to controversy, and very often with their discords they kill the patient (ii. 86). It may be that this is the secret why, in days nearer to our own, Cabinets of all the Talents have sometimes been cabinets of all the blunders. Chamfort, the cynical wit of the Revolution, asked how many fools it takes to make a public; Guicciardini, on the other hand, would have told us that it takes very few clever men to make a fool.

* *Sonnets of Michelangelo and Campanella*, translated by J. A. Symonds, p. 143.

Voltaire put the saying of Messer Antonio with more piquancy and more widely, if less reasonably, in his remark that, *Quand les hommes s'attroupent, leurs oreilles s'allongent*—‘When men get into a flock their ears grow long.’ Cato took it differently when he used to say of the Romans, that ‘they were like sheep, for a man had better drive a flock of them than one of them; for in a flock if you can but get some few to go right, the rest will follow.’*⁹ Perhaps Burke comes nearest to the mark:—‘Man is a most unwise and a most wise being. The individual is foolish. The multitude for the moment is foolish, when they act without deliberation; but the species is wise, and when time is given to it, as a species it almost always acts right.’

III

On the whole, one must repeat, Guicciardini treats his kind with wise leniency. ‘Men are all by nature more inclined to do good than ill; nor is there anybody who, where he is not by some strong consideration pulled the other way, would not more willingly do good than ill. But so frail is man’s nature, and so frequent in this world are the occasions that invite to ill, that men easily let them-

* ‘Contio, quae ex imperitissimis constat, tamen indicare solet quid intersit inter popularem, id est assentatorem et levem civem, et inter constantem et severum et gravem.’—Cicero, *De Amic.* xxv. 95.

selves stray from the good.' Is not this still, nearly four centuries later, the truth of the case? Not ferocity but distraction; not vileness but incoherency, mistakes about cause and effect, short sight, bad memory, wavering will, that which Bishop Butler groaned over as the 'immoral thoughtlessness' of men. Then, not afraid of something like a contradiction, Guicciardini swings round in the other quarter:—'It may seem a harsh and suspicious thing to say—and would to heaven it were not true: there are more bad men than good, especially where interests of property or polities (*di Stato*) are concerned. Therefore, except with those whom either by your own experience, or thoroughly trustworthy report, you know to be good, you cannot go wrong in dealing with everybody else with your eyes well open. It needs cleverness to contrive this, without getting a bad name for being distrustful. But the point is not to trust, wherever you are not sure it is safe' (201).

We can imagine Cavour on his estates at Leri, in the years before he was called to take the helm at Turin, brooding intently over such a passage as this:—'No two popes were more unlike than Julius the Second and Clement the Seventh; the one of great and even dauntless spirit, impatient, impulsive, open, frank; the other of a middling temperament, perhaps even timid, infinitely patient, moderate, a dissembler. Yet from natures so opposed, men look for the same results in large

exploits. For with great masters patience and impetuosity are alike fit to bring forth great things; the one dashes swiftly upon men, and forces circumstance; the other wears men and things out, and conquers by time and opportunity. Hence where one hurts, the other helps, and conversely. If a man could join both characters, and use each at the right time, he would be divine. As that is impossible, I believe that, everything considered, patience and moderation do greater things than impetuosity and hurry' (381). On the morrow of the peace of Paris in 1856, Cavour, then the little-known Minister of the Sardinian Kingdom, had a conversation with Lord Clarendon. He talked hardily of war to the death with Austria. Lord Clarendon told him, truly enough, that the moment had not yet come for saying this aloud. Cavour replied: 'I have given you proofs of my moderation and prudence; I believe that in politics you should be exceedingly reserved in words, and exceedingly decided in act. There are positions where there is less danger in taking an audacious line, than in an excess of prudence.' He was himself a master example of the rare men who could join both characters, and use each at the right time.

Guicciardini is always pressing us to stick to the particular case with which we deal. "'Tis a great mistake to talk of the things of the world absolutely, without discriminating, and as it were by rule. For in nearly everything there are distinctions and ex-

ceptions, due to variety of circumstances. These circumstances you cannot treat by one and the same standard. Such distinctions and exceptions are not to be found in books; you must learn them from your own discretion' (6). Take care, he says, how you judge by examples, for if they are not exactly on all fours, the least diversity in antecedent conditions becomes the widest diversity in conclusion. If one link in your reasoning is weak, all the rest may snap. We may write maxims in books, but exceptions in circumstance are for ever arising, and these can only find a place on the tablets of discretion. This comes to what is reported to have been said by Prince Bismarck: 'Politics are less a science than an art. They cannot be taught. One must be born with a gift for them. The best advice is of no value, if you do not know how to carry it out in the right way, and with due regard to the circumstances of each case.' And that again brings politics very near to the same point at which Logic was placed by an eminent head of a college at Oxford. He ended a discussion on the old question whether Logic is a science or an art, by the decision that 'it is neither a science nor an art; it is a dodge.'

In the same spirit Guicciardini offers wholesome counsel to such as are tempted to fashion modern policies on ancient history. 'How vastly do those deceive themselves who at every word bring up the Romans! You should have a city in the con-

ditions under which they existed, and then you might have a government after their pattern. For those who have not the qualities to match, this is as extravagant as to expect an ass to go as fast as a horse' (110). Then, with the apparent self-contradiction that is common with all these masters of sentences:—‘Past throws light on Future because the world was ever of the same make; and all that is or will be in another day, has already been, and the same things return, only with different names and colours. ’Tis not everybody who knows them under the new face, but the wise know them’ (336).

All this comes very much to what our excellent English Selden says, in words that have many applications, and are well worth remembering by all teachers in press and pulpit even in our own day of perfect light:—‘*Aye or No never answered any question.* The not distinguishing where things should be distinguished, and the not confounding where things should be confounded, is the cause of all the mistakes in the world.’

Sleepless circumspection, minute, particular, patient, intense, in act and word and plan,—this is the master key. Treat everything as laden with a serious possibility. ‘I do not believe there is a worse thing in all the world than levity. Light men are the very instruments for anything that is bad, dangerous, and hurtful. Flee from them like fire’ (147).

‘Make as many friends as ever you can, for you never know in what contingency a man may be able to serve you. Hide displeasure ; I have often had to seek the aid of those against whom I was at heart thoroughly ill-disposed ; and they, believing the contrary of me, or at any rate not being aware of this, have served me as readily as possible’ (133, 266).

‘Unperceived beginnings often open the way either to great mischiefs, or to great success ; therefore note everything, and weigh even trifles well. On your doing, or not doing, what seems at the moment a mere trifle, often hang things of first importance ; so be sure to consider well’ (82, 247).

‘Never hold a future thing so certain, however positively certain it may seem, as not, if you can possibly do it without upsetting your plan, to keep in reserve some course to follow, in case the contrary should turn up. I often see really long-headed men, when they have to make up their minds upon some weighty business, set about it by considering two or three cases that are most likely to happen, and come to a decision on the assumption that one of these cases is sure to come. This is dangerous, for often and even usually there arises some third or fourth case that has been overlooked, and which your decision will not fit. You had much better keep your decision strictly to what the actual necessity of the matter compels’ (81, 182).

In politics nothing tragic, everything serious. — ‘The ruler of a State must not be frightened at dangers, however great, near, and actual they look. As the proverb goes, The devil is not so black as he is painted. Often things happen that melt the dangers away ; and even when the

evils come, you find some cure or some mitigation that you had never imagined' (116).

So, then, look out for chance and surprise. Leave all doors open. Never tie your hands. Give plenty of room for the chapter of accidents, good or bad. Yet you should never drift. Occasion is everything. The wizard is he who divines the moment that is neither too soon nor too late. History, since Guicciardini's day, abounds in cases where statesmen have made shipwreck from forgetting that time and the moment are all, and mistaking the pace at which opportunity ripens.

Here are some miscellaneous hints for any date, some sensible, some cunning, some a little odious. The Politic Man will appropriate the epithets at his choice.

False as a bulletin. — 'A man who is carrying on great affairs is wont to cover up the things that are unpleasant, and to exaggerate what is favourable. 'Tis a kind of charlatany, and entirely contrary to my nature. But as success depends more often on the opinions of people than on actual results, to spread the story that things are going well helps you, and the contrary does you harm' (86).

Character the real treasure. — 'Do not place popularity before reputation, because with lost reputation popularity is lost. But he who keeps up reputation, will never find friends, favour, popularity wanting' (42).

No general indictments. — 'Be careful in your conversation never needlessly to say things which, if they were

reported, might displease others; because such things in times and ways you never thought of, often turn up to do you vast mischief. When occasion drives you to say what must be offensive to somebody else, at least be sure that it only offends the individual. Do not speak ill of his country, or of his family or connections; it is folly, while you only wish to strike one, to affront many' (42).

Fast bind, fast find. — 'My father, when praising thrift, used to say that one ducat in the purse brings more honour than ten ducats spent' (44).

To put to sea without constancy, a voyage that ends in nothing. — 'Persistency is everything. It is not enough to set business going, to give it a direction and a start. You must follow it up, and never take your hand off until the very end' (192).

Circumspection the golden rule, only we must never let it paralyse us. 'Though we should enter upon all our undertakings with deliberation, we must not therefore conjure up so many obstacles as to make success seem desperate. Rather it concerns us to remember that as we go on, knots will often untie themselves and difficulties vanish.'

A commonplace for political captains. — 'In war often have I seen news come that made our business look bad; then at a stroke would come other news that looked like victory; or it would be the other way about. And these contradictions would constantly happen. So a good captain should not too easily be either cast down or lifted up' (127).

The Righteous man begging his bread, and the Wicked flourishing as the green bay tree.—‘Never say, God has helped such an one because he was good, or hindered such another because he was bad. For we often see things go just the other way. Nor for all that ought we to say that divine justice halts, God’s counsels being so deep that rightly do men talk of *abyssus multa*—we cannot fathom them’ (92).

*No dilettantism: nothing for ‘a cake that is not turned.’**—‘With him who is in his very soul bent on fame, all succeeds, for he spares no pains nor money nor risks. I have proved this in my own person, and so I can write it. Dead and empty are the doings of men that lack this pricking spur’ (118).

Mediocrity the best.—‘Too keen wits mean unhappiness and torment; they only bring on a man perplexity and trouble, from which those with heads of the positive sort are quite free. He who has sound judgment can make far more use of the man with only clever brains, than the clever man can make use of him. The man with the positive head has a better time in the world, lives longer, and in a certain fashion is happier, than the man with high intellect, for a noble intellect carries with it toil and fret. At the same time one partakes more of the brute than the man, while the other transcends humanity and approaches the divine’ (60, 232, 337).

He that regards the winds does not sow, and he that regards the clouds does not reap.—‘We cannot blame men for being slow to resolve. For though occasions come when it is

* Hosea vii. 8.

necessary to decide quickly, yet for the most part who decides quickly, more often goes wrong than he who decides slowly. What is always thoroughly to be blamed is slowness in action after decision taken. Whatever your decision and whatever your plan, there is always a reason to the contrary. Whence it comes that so many people stand in suspense, because every small difficulty disturbs them. These are they whom we call over-scrupulous, because they stumble on a scruple at every turn. This is all wrong. We ought to weigh the drawbacks on every side, and then to make up our minds for the course where drawbacks are fewest' (191, 213).

A lottery after all. — 'In human things it is fortune that has the mastery. Every hour we see mighty results due to accidents that nobody could either foresee or divert. Penetration and care may temper the force of things, still you need good fortune. A fool will sometimes come better out than a wise man; for the one will trust much to Reason, and little to Fortune, while the other trusts much to Fortune and little to Reason' (30, 136).

IV

Guicciardini is fond of that saying of the ancients, *Magistratus virum ostendit*, office shows the man. 'Nothing reveals the quality of men like giving them authority and things to do. Place discovers a man's capacity and his character. How many people know how to talk, and do not know how to act; how many on benches and in the market-place seem excellent, yet when put into employ-

ment turn out mere phantoms (*riescono ombre*)' (163, 258).

The political path is thickly strewn with these historic humiliations, the men whom everybody would have thought *capaces imperii, nisi imperasset*. Eminent place, La Bruyère said, makes the great man greater than he is, the small man it makes less. Some hold in our own day, that if you would know the real qualities of a public man, you must find out — if you can — what is thought of him, not by his constituents, not by his fellow-members, but by the permanent officials who have served under him. The general estimate formed of him in the House of Commons is no doubt unerring, but the House does not see him at such close quarters, and in a popular assembly the plausible may go further than the substantial. Only the permanent official can tell you for certain whether his chief is quick or slow, idle or diligent; whether he allows himself to see two sides to a question; how far he is free from the vanity of supposing that he knows everything, and how far he has the fine talent of the good learner; whether he has the indispensable gift of making up his mind and holding to it; what sort of a judge he is of probabilities; whether he is sure in hand and foot, cool or flurried, considerate or selfish, straightforward or tortuous, a man of initiative and resource. It may be that not only does office, as Guicciardini says, show the man to others; it may

possibly, if he has time in which to think of such things, reveal him to himself to his own lively surprise. Such is the modern confirmation of the ancient saying, *ἀρχὴ ἀνδρα δείκνυσι*, which made so deep a mark on Guicciardini that he winds up the last page of his History with it.

What the critic means by saying that the *Ricordi* are Italian corruption reduced to a code, may be seen in such reflections as these: ‘Always deny what you do not wish to have known, and affirm what you wish to have believed; for though there may be proofs and even certainty the other way, a bold affirmation or denial will perplex the listener.’ In the cynic’s vein is this: ‘One of the greatest strokes of good fortune is for a man to have an opportunity of showing that in the things he does for his own interest, he was moved by the thought of the public good. This is what shed glory on the enterprises of the Catholic King; what he did for his own security or aggrandisement, often looked as if it were done for the advancement of the Christian faith or the defence of the Church.’

‘What is sincere and free and generous is always pleasing, but sometimes it does you harm. On the other hand, to dissemble may be useful, and on occasions even necessary, owing to the evil character of other people; but it is odious and ugly. Hence I do not know which one should choose. I should suppose that a man might use the one in an ordinary way, yet without abandoning the

other; I mean in common practice, to use the first so as to earn the name of a liberal person, and yet in certain important and rare cases to use dissimulation, which in a man who generally lives as I have said, is all the more successful, because, from having the opposite character, you are the more readily believed' (26). As though character were like the fingers of a clock to be moved at will backwards and forwards, independently of the wheels and springs, balances and escapements, that regulate its daily action and make it what it is. The grievous failings and frantic inconsistencies and dire lapses of human nature are only too familiar. But to suppose that a man shall sedulously train himself to walk in straight paths, yet with freedom deliberately reserved to run off at a tangent into crooked ways whenever convenience requires, argues an eccentric psychology indeed.

'To save yourself,' says Guicciardini (101), 'from a cruel and brutal tyrant, there is no rule or physic that avails, except what you advise for the plague; flee from him as fast as ever you can.' Selden puts this point in the old homely *apologue*: 'Wise men say nothing in dangerous times. The lion, you know, called the sheep, to ask her if his breath smelt; she said Aye; he bit off her head for a fool. He called the wolf and asked him; he said No; he tore him in pieces for a flatterer. At last he called the fox and asked him: Truly he had got a cold and could not smell.' Still, *vulpine* is *vulpine*, and

while we do not grudge the fox his chance, the old truth remains. The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, and the man driven by weakness of the flesh into full flight from peril, may well be stricken by a secret envy of those brave heroic hearts, that noble army of witnesses, those spirits of fire, who in all ages and for many causes that seemed forlorn have fought the fight, run the course, and kept the faith.

Without ascending to these pure and exalted heights, we may refresh ourselves by thinking of such a man as Turgot. The contrast may help to show the Politic Man where he stands. Turgot, says his biographer, would not endure that any mixture of falseness, or the least appearance of charlatanry, should soil the purity or the conduct of a public man. He knew the means, he scorned to use them. They taxed him with ignorance of men. This is what they called *maladresse*. Few philosophers have had a better founded knowledge of man. But he concerned himself little with the art of knowing particular men, of knowing the small details of their interests, of their passions, of the fashion in which they hide or reveal them, of the springs of their intrigues and their quackery.*

The Florentine or the Venetian School would have mocked at a reformer such as this. Whether France could have escaped the abyss, if instead of Turgot's, her affairs at that decisive moment had

* Condorcet's *Vie de Turgot*. *Œuv.* v. 152-4.

fallen into the hands of some supple and vigilant Cavour nourished on Guicciardini, is a question which we may put if we like. What is certain is that the Directory, whose incompetency and rottenness opened the way for Bonaparte, were the very type that the maxims of our Florentine are fitted to produce.

v

It remains to say something of Guicciardini as historian. Early in his career he had shown his taste in this direction. In 1509 he wrote his *History of Florence*, comprising the period between Cosmo de' Medici and the repulse of the Venetians at the Ghiaradadda (1434-1508). None of Guicciardini's writings saw the light in his lifetime, and this was not given to the world until our own day (1859). Sallust, in a good phrase, says that when he made up his mind to leave public affairs, 'non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium conterere,' he had no mind to wear out his good leisure in listlessness and sloth, or in such things as farming or hunting. Whether Sallust was little better, as some illustrious scholars say, than an adroit pamphleteer or clever literary artificer, at least we might wish that Guicciardini had striven to imitate the terseness and compression of his countrymen, who had written chapters of Roman history fifteen centuries before him. Like Voltaire and others, Guicciardini had the habit of the pen,

and would rather be writing than not. He lived until 1540. It is said that he thought of composing commentaries on his own life, and this must always be the most interesting thing that any public man on his final retirement can undertake, if only he allows himself to speak the truth. A wise friend warned him how much ill-will he would be sure to stir up, and set him upon a history of Italy instead. Yet Guicciardini knew the impossibilities of every historic task. Walpole, according to a well-worn legend, begged them not to read history to him, 'for that I know must be false.' Our Italian said something very like it: 'Do not wonder that you are ignorant of things of past ages, and of things done in distant places. For if you well consider it, there is no real information as to the present, or as to what is done from day to day in the same city. Often between palace and market-place is a cloud so thick or a wall so big that the people know as little of what is done by those who rule them, or of the reason for doing it, as they know of what they do in India. So it comes about that the world easily fills itself with wrong and empty notions' (*Ric.* 141).

In the deeper problems of political philosophy, he shows no interest. Is the key to great movements in history nothing more subtle or mysterious than the inborn restlessness of men? Had Machiavelli found the secret when he declared, 'What throws empires down is that the powerful are never

satisfied with their power ; one rises, another dies ; the ruler is for ever pining with fresh ambitions and new apprehension.' Can this be as true of democracy as of oligarchs and autocrats ? Is history an unmeaning procession across a phantom scene, a fantastic cycle of strange stage-plays, where conquerors, pontiffs, law-givers, saints, jesters, march in pomp or squalor, in ephemeral triumphs and desperate reverse ? Or is it, again, the record of such growth among civil communities as the naturalist traces in the succession of organisms material and palpable, and is the historian's task to find and illustrate the laws by which the long process has been moulded ? Is history, as Bossuet would persuade us, the long and solemn vindication of the mysterious purposes of God to man, the ordered working of the Unseen Powers as they raise up states and empires, then cast them headlong down again in stern and measured rhythm ? How far have great events sprung from small occasions, and vast public catastrophes from puny private incidents ? The extraordinary individual, an Alexander or a Cæsar, how far is he the agent, how far the master, of circumstance ? Is he, in the broad aspect, only the instrument of forces viewless as the winds, a strenuous helmsman on a blind and driving tide, or is he himself the force that shapes, resists, controls, compels ? All this, Guicciardini would have said, is not history, but the interpretation of history ; I am historian, not interpreter ; my

task is to narrate a given series of events, to show their connection with one another, to set out the character of political men, to describe parties and personal ambitions, to tell the story, and then leave you to draw your own moral, if you can find one.

His work embraces a period of rather less than forty years, from 1494 to 1532, from the memorable expedition of Charles the Eighth of France into Italy, down to the death of Pope Clement the Seventh. It comprises a long series of events that composed one of the most marked stages, transitions, or revolutions in the history of the Western world. If the Middle Ages bridge five hundred years from 1000 to 1500, modern history begins where Guicciardini begins; and when he ends, a chain of forces, powers, interests, policies, nationalities, dynasties and states, territorial rights and claims, had taken on those definite forms whose conflict, relations, distribution, make up European annals down to the time of Napoleon. Statesmen strive with varying gifts of vision to penetrate and guide the immediate tasks of their own particular time and country, but even the most far-sighted of them do but dimly grope after the broad historic significance of their age as a whole. It would have been a miracle if Guicciardini had seized the full meaning of his period, easy as it may seem for us four hundred years later. Still he was well aware that the European system was undergoing a profound change, and he comprehended how the old

Italian system was overthrown within his two dates.

All over the West, dictatorship was rising on the ruins of feudalism. Great territorial unions and strong monarchies were covering Europe. It was the era of concentration. When Guicciardini went on his embassy to Ferdinand, he found what in Ferdinand's youth had been the three rival kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, and Granada practically welded into a single power. France under Louis ⁺ the Eleventh had already marched a long way towards that establishment of autoeratic power, which it still took a century more for Richelieu fully to complete. Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth between them had firmly built up the Tudor monarchy, and found for England a place in the new European scheme. The Hapsburgs had achieved the most wonderful union of all, for in their hands at last was united, besides the Austrian States, supremacy in the Netherlands, in Spain, in Sicily, in Bohemia, in Hungary. Growing intimacies sprang up between European countries. As nations became consolidated, their relations with one another spread over a more extensive field. High projects of international policy which have filled so much space in Western history ever since, started on their chequered and shifting course. The practice of sending resident ambassadors took definite shape, and sovereigns sought to gain their ends by substituting diplomacy for force. Now

first began the long struggle between France and the House of Austria. For Guicciardini the most important thing was the opening of that invasion of Italy by foreigners—that appointment, as it has been described, by nearly all the nations of Europe of a rendezvous for a sanguinary tournament in Italy—which ended in the definite preponderance of the House of Austria in the Peninsula, and in the coronation of Charles the Fifth at Bologna (1530). Not less momentous than these vast political transformations was the discovery of the New World. Many will regard the Reformation as even more stupendous an event in the history of mankind, than either the growth of national monarchies or the discovery of new continents. For the speculative reasoner upon human progress, that is a question pregnant with issues of absorbing interest; but whatever we may think about this, it was impossible for Guicciardini to judge a drama of which in 1530 not more than the first act had yet been played. Though always a Catholic both in practice and conviction, he hated the clergy and the papal court. He says nobody can think so ill of the Roman Court as it deserves, for it is an infamy, and an example of all the shame and reproach in all the world (*Op. Ined.* i. 27). ‘I do not know a man,’ he says elsewhere, ‘more disgusted than I am at the ambition, the greed, the unmanliness of the priests, partly because every one of these vices is hateful in itself, partly because each by itself and all of them to-

gether are specially unbecoming in one who professes a life dedicated to God. Yet the position that I held under more than one Pope has compelled me for my own interest to desire their aggrandisement. But for that, I should have loved Martin Luther as myself, not that I might throw off the laws laid down in the Christian religion as it is commonly interpreted and understood, but in order to see this gang of scoundrels brought within due bounds — that is, either rid of their vices or stripped of their authority' ^{*} (*Ric.* 28).* When Guicciardini comes to the full dress of history, his voice sounds in a slightly different key, but the substance is the same.

In style, sorry as he would have been to know it, he is in truth not more than a plain, steady writer, with no large general power over the noble organ of language; and when he tries to be more, the result is not diapason but drone. He cultivates the long sentence, and constantly runs to twenty lines, without prejudice to a frequent extension to five-and-thirty. This makes hard reading, but it is not the same thing as prolixity, for he does not repeat himself, nor wander from the point, nor overload with qualifications. When we find ourselves safe and sound at the thirtieth line, we have really crossed a broad piece of ground. His phrase is heavy, and yet, as Thiers says, he moves along like a man of lively spirit, only with indifferent legs.

* See a reference to this passage in *La Contre-Révolution Relig.*, par Martin Philippson (Brussels, 1884).

He has little dramatic power, and the notable discourses that he puts into the mouths of leading characters, are not always marked by salient feature of person and occasion.

The introduction of fictitious discourses at all would be an outrage on modern standards, but for some time after the revival of learning, historians followed the example set by survivors from antique times, headed by the magisterial authority of Thucydides.* In his battles we do not hear the clash of arms in charge and repulse, the clatter of the guns and the horsemen, the trumpets, the shouting, the din, and the trampling. In his sieges and sacks we are not shaken by the fury of the assault, by shriek and crash, red flames, horrors of rape and murder, and all the grisly squalor of war and man turned demon. Pitiless cruelty never in history went further than the systematic ferocities of Spaniard and German in Italy in the sixteenth century. The Ottoman was not more ruthless in all the arts of violence, lust, and torture than the soldiers of the Catholie King; and the soldiers of the Most Christian King were not far behind. Guicciardini stamps these abominations as they pass, without excitement, but with a steady hand. The sack of Prato by the Spaniards (1512), the sack of Brescia by the French (1512), the more

* See on the practice of introducing imaginary speeches into history, an interesting collection of cases and comments in Sir George Lewis's *Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics*, ii. 232-43.

memorable sack by Spanish and German adventurers of eternal Rome itself (1527), are not, after our modern fashion, made to crowd large canvases with apocalyptic detail. But then the worth of political and civil history does not, like romance and melodrama, depend on stirred sensations. The historian's account of the murderous battle of Ravenna (1512) (x. 4), where the French, under the youthful Gaston de Foix, routed the hosts of Spain and the Pope, is precise and intelligible, not without impressive touches, and the reader who seeks knowledge, and not merely a horrified imagination, need ask for nothing better. Those who want more would find Cæsar's Commentaries bald, though some judges think them the best historical style that ever was written. The story of the memorable encounter of French and Swiss at Marignano, 1515 (xii. 5), has not only Guicciardini's general merits, but is full of warmth and energy; how the Swiss in Milan, excited by the words of their leaders, suddenly grasped their arms in fury, formed up in marching order, and though not a couple of hours of daylight were left, sallied forth with exultant cries and flung themselves against the French battery; how the fierce battle raged till long after dark, when each side without sound of trumpet or word of command, in silent truce ceased perforce from the struggle until the next day's sun should dawn; how when the day broke, the implacable conflict began afresh; and how at last

when 20,000 men lay dead upon the ground, the remnant of the beaten Swiss made their way back to Milan in dogged order, unquenched ferocity still blazing in their eye and mien. The historian does not often show such glowing colour.

His reflections are sometimes trite, but they are natural and sincere. Ludovic Sforza after his defeat was sent a prisoner by the French King to the dreary castle of Loches, and there for the last thirteen years of his life was locked up with no better company than the faded shadows of his own restless and passionate ambition. 'So fleeting, various, and miserable is the lot of man,' says Guicciardini. Only the commonplace refrain of all the ages, it is true; yet what more is to be said? It is hardly an accident that so many of the most valued histories that have survived in literature are so deeply tinged with gloom, and labour so much upon adverse things, the spite of evil generations, the frowardness of men, and all the inscrutable ironies of dark fate. We may recall the quaint chapter in *Commynes* that contains his 'discourse upon the miserie of man's life,' by the example of those princes that lived in the author's time, and first of King Louis the Eleventh; how he considered the case of Charles the Bold of Burgundy, and Edward of England, Matthias King of Hungary, and Mahomet the Ottoman. He only chants the ancient chorus, but can the pomp of Bossuet carry the moral further?

After all, the vital question about the historian is whether he tells the truth. He ought to be statesman, reasoner, critic, drudge. His gifts are sagacity, clearness, order. These he needs, whether he be historic artist, seeking to delight great audiences, or scientific student, content to explore, to disentangle, to clear the ground. What we require, says Ranke, is naked truth without ornament; thorough exploration of detail, no inventions, no brain-spinnings (*hirngespinnst*). In other words, History is to descend from her place among the Muses. The illustrious German does not acquit Guicciardini. He complains that the Italian's observance of strict and minute chronological order, as in Ariosto, destroys the interest; that much of his work is compiled from other books without special investigation; that weighty facts are wholly misrepresented; that the speeches which make up no small part of the work have no claim to a place among historic monuments.*

The secondary charge of some unavowed debt to other historians must here be left in the backwoods of antiquarian controversy. It is certain, moreover, that inasmuch as half of his work concerns events in which he was neither actor nor eyewitness, though he was a contemporary, it does not stand throughout in the very highest class of original and first-hand monuments, which must be reserved for

* *Samml. Werke*, xxxiv. p. 24. Villari does his best to defend his countryman against the charge of borrowing.—*Machiavelli*, iii. 481-96.

those who are not only contemporaries but more. On this side, it may well be that Guicciardini like others of his school falls before that general scepticism which has been well described as undermining all narrative history, certainly not excepting history written by contemporaries, inevitably moved as they are by turbid passions of the hour. A valuable field still lies open in Guicciardini. *Motivirung*, the exploration of men's motives, the opening out of what seemed inexplicable, the presentation of diverse aspects of a case as they showed themselves to those who had to choose and to act — here was Guicciardini's true art. And so it was recognised as being in the generation after his death. From the first, the competent public throughout Europe admired the acuteness and comprehension with which he tracks out a political situation in root and in branch, views it on every side, exposes all the alternatives, and hits upon deciding elements in complex transactions. This it is which explains the remarkable fact that before the end of the sixteenth century his History ran through ten editions in Italian, three in Latin, and three in French, and was translated into English, German, Dutch, and three times into Spanish. Nobody so aptly satisfied the vigorous curiosity of that age as to motives and characters in the age before it. Nobody offered estimates of leading actors more excellent in that uncommon quality which the French call *justesse*. There are few

better portraits in written history, for instance, than his of Lorenzo (*Stor. Fior.* ix.), and no subtler appreciation than those of Leo the Tenth and Clement the Seventh (*Stor. d'Ital.* xvi. 5).

Montaigne tells us that when he finished a book, he had a habit of writing in it the general idea he had formed of the author as he read it. Among these books was Guicciardini's *History of Italy*. He praises the historian's diligence; his freedom from the bias of hatred, favour, or vanity; his exactitude; the fine strokes with which he enriches his digressions and discourses. Then he proceeds to a deeper criticism. 'I have also remarked this, that of so many characters and results on which he pronounces judgment, of such divers counsels and movements, he never refers a single one of them to virtue, to religion, or to conscience; just as if such things were gone clean out of the world. Of all the acts that he describes, however fair they may look in themselves, he always traces back the cause to some vicious source, or to some hope of selfish advantage.'* That was no more than the brand of Guicciardini's time and school. His abstention from definite judgments of right or wrong in the actions that he describes is systematic. A free-spoken Pope is reported to have said on the death of Richelieu, 'If there is a God, the Cardinal will have to smart for what he has done; but if there is no God, he was certainly an excellent man.'

* *Essais de Montaigne*, Bk. II. ch. x., 'Des Livres.'

Our historian also leaves these delicate questions open. We feel in him the force of Gibbon's remark, that the tone of history will rise or fall with the spirit of the age. In that age nobody saw any harm or heard a cynic's voice in Guicciardini's remark upon Ferdinand of Aragon, that 'no reproach attaches to him, save his lack of generosity and faithlessness to his word.' It may or may not be true in literature that 'it is the mark of finesse of mind not to come to a conclusion' (Renan). It is less true in history. 'In polities,' one critic of our Italian has said, 'compromise may often be an excellent course; but in a history what we want are clear-cut judgments; the human conscience insists upon it.' That is not Guicciardini's view. He would never have allowed conscience, like a barbarian Brennus, to fling its heavy keen-edged sword into the scale of complex, dim, awkward, and nicely balanced facts. Of him, as of Thiers, it may be said that 'he does not trouble himself to judge, but to seize.' The only need of which he is conscious is to see as clearly as he can what men did, and why they did it. If we add to this the great advance that he made in historic conception when he substituted a general for merely local or provincial history, and if we consider his accurate presentation of the political and moral thought of his age, we may understand his place in literature, and the impression that he has made upon important minds.



A NEW CALENDAR OF GREAT MEN



A NEW CALENDAR OF GREAT MEN*

EVEN those competent students who thought most ill of Comte's attempt to transform his philosophy into a religion, have agreed to praise the Positivist Calendar. This remarkable list of between five and six hundred worthies of all ages and nations, classified under thirteen main heads, from Theocratic Civilisation down to Modern Science and Modern Industry, was drawn up with the design of substituting for the saints of the Catholic Calendar the men whose work marks them out in history as leaders and benefactors in the gradual development of the human race. On Comte's effort to erect a new polity and a new religion, with himself as its high priest and pontiff, nobody has brought to bear, I will not say merely so much hostile criticism, but such downright indignation, as Mr. Mill. His pages on the later speculations of Comte are the only instance in all his works in which he treats a philosopher from whom he differs, with the bitterness felt by the ordinary carnal man for the perversities of an opponent, or, what are more provoking still, the aberrations of a friend. Yet Mill has little but praise for the profound and comprehensive survey

* *The New Calendar of Great Men.* Edited by Frederic Harrison. London: Macmillan and Co.

of the past progress of human society which is the basis of the Calendar, and guides its author's choice of the names to which we are to dedicate the days of the secular year.

‘While Comte sets forth,’ says Mill, ‘the historical succession of systems of belief and forms of political society, and places in the strongest light those imperfections in each which make it impossible that any of them should be final, this does not make him for a moment unjust to the men or to the opinions of the past. He accords with generous recognition the gratitude due to all who, with whatever imperfections of doctrine or even of conduct, contributed materially to the work of human improvement. . . . His list of heroes and benefactors of mankind includes not only every important name in the scientific movement, from Thales of Miletus to Fourier the mathematician and Blainville the biologist, and, in the æsthetic, from Homer to Manzoni, but the most illustrious names in the annals of the various religions and philosophies, and the really great politicians in all states of society. Above all, he has the most profound admiration for the services rendered by Christianity and by the Church of the Middle Ages. . . . A more comprehensive, and, in the primitive sense of the term, more catholic sympathy and reverence towards real worth and every kind of service to humanity, we have not met with in any thinker. Men who would have torn each other to pieces, who

even tried to do so, if each usefully served in his own way the interests of mankind, are all hallowed to Comte.

‘Neither is his a cramped and contracted notion of human excellence, which cares only for certain forms of development. He not only personally appreciates, but rates high in moral value, the creations of poets and artists in all departments, deeming them, by their mixed appeal to the sentiments and the understanding, admirably fitted to educate the feelings of abstract thinkers, and enlarge the intellectual horizon of the people of the world.’

An even weightier judgment than Mill’s upon such a question is that of Littré. For Littré, while inferior to Mill in speculative power, as well as in taste and aptitude for actual affairs as they go past us, both travelled more widely over vast fields of human knowledge, and possessed in important departments of it a closer and more special acquaintance with detail. Littré, like Mill, at a critical moment in the growth of his opinions, and about the same time of life, conceived an ardent admiration for Comte’s exposition of the positive philosophy, and he became, and remained to the end, its firm adherent. ‘Employed,’ he says, ‘upon very different subjects—history, language, physiology, medicine, erudition—I constantly used it as a sort of instrument to trace out for me the lineaments, the origin, and the outcome of each

question. It suffices for all, it never misleads, it always enlightens.' Like Mill—though less provoked than Mill by Comte's arrogance, his pontifical airs, and his hatred of liberty—Littré rejected utterly and without qualification the later speculations, in which he held Comte to have thrown overboard the method and the principles on which he had built up the system of positive philosophy. Yet Littré declares that the Positivist Calendar deserves a place in the library of everybody who studies history; though we may discuss this admission or that exclusion, yet we must admire the sureness of judgment applied to so many men and over such diversity of matter; finally, it is a powerful means of developing the historic spirit and the sentiment of continuity; it is a luminous manual of meditation and instruction.

The English disciples of Comte have rendered good service to literature and to knowledge by introducing to public attention a performance so commended by such authorities. They have taken their teacher's elaborate list of those who have played an effective part in Western civilization, and they have clothed each of these five hundred and fifty-eight names with an apparel of biographical and historical fact, which informs the reader who they were, and what is their title to a place in a great concrete picture of human evolution. If the Calendar itself be worth anything, this illustration of the Calendar was well worth supplying. If, as

Littré promises, the picture itself is to quicken meditation and to serve for instruction, then this explanation of each figure in the picture is an indispensable guide, commentary, and handbook. Mr. Harrison tells us with lucidity and precision in his preface what it is that he and his companions have done. The book is not a dictionary, for the names are placed, not in alphabetical order, but in historic sequence. They are selected again not with a view to the space they fill in common fame or in literary discussion, but in relation to a definite principle of grouping—namely, the contribution made by the given individual to the progress of mankind. These little biographies constitute, like the skeleton Calendar on which they are built up, 'a balanced whole, constructed, with immense care, to mark the relative importance of different movements, races, and ages.'

How much diligent and conscientious trouble must have been taken, can only be realised by those who are practised in literary workmanship. Condensation is the hardest of all the requirements of composition of this kind; and these little lives are marvels of condensation. Let anybody try to write about Fénelon or the Architects of the Middle Ages in a single small page; or Mozart, or Roger Bacon, or Bossuet, or Saint Louis in two; or Descartes in three; or Julius Cæsar or Pope Hildebrand in four; or Aristotle in five: he will then be able to measure the industry, perspicacity, discrimina-

tion, and let us not forget also the self-denial and self-control, which have gone to the production of these little vignettes. The writers make no attempt at literary display, though at least three of them are masters of the arts of style and expression. Some of them may seem to share the just regret expressed by a great historian, that history cannot be treated apart from literature and style, like geometry or chemistry; still as a whole the writing is excellent. The merit could not be expected to be absolutely equal in a team of fifteen; but one can only admire the skill and success with which the unity of the central idea has been preserved, and a real, not a mechanical, harmony attained in bringing into a single fabric under one roof the shrines of the great servants of mankind in science and in philosophy; in painting, sculpture, music, romance, history; lyric, elegiac, and dramatic poetry; in government and religion. The field is enormous; so is the number of individual facts, names, dates, in all languages and all branches; so is the quantity of separate estimates, appreciations, verdicts, and judgments. It is not too much to say—so far as a critic like myself can judge—that a high level of general competency has been attained, though, of course, in a survey of this encyclopædic magnitude, there are a thousand points for remark, deduction, and objection. In one respect everybody will concur. Even those who are most ready to find Positivism as a creed hard, frigid, repulsive,

and untrue, will still recognise and admire the genuine and devoted enthusiasm for purity, nobility, beauty, in art, literature, character, life, and service, that has inspired the present enterprise and marks every page of it.

Nobody must suppose that the book which Mr. Harrison has edited is to be skimmed, or merely dipped into, or even once read through and then dismissed. It is extremely readable, for that matter, but it demands and is intended for digestion and rumination. Two of the most important principles that are now established in all contemporary minds with any pretence to call themselves educated, are, first, the unity of history and the ordered continuity of European civilisation and science; second, that the place and quality of a contribution to thought, feeling, or art is relative to the social conditions of time and place, of country and generation. Unless guided and illuminated by these two ideas, the study of anything like general history is impossible, and for purposes of that popular education which is every day all over the world becoming more and more a leading circumstance of our time, general history is seen to be of growing value and importance, both for its own sake as knowledge, and as a corrective to the crude and narrow tendencies incident to the ever-waxing rule of numbers.

Hardly any collected view of the history of the world is so bad, as not to be better than to have no view at all. Decisively as we may object to much

in Comte's spirit and teaching — to the stifling predominance, for instance, which he allowed Order to obtain in his mind over Progress, though he incessantly professed to value Progress and Order alike — still, even his chart, imperfect and avowedly provisional as it is and must be, is better than drifting in a boat over the sea of history without a helmsman or a course. Great minds have felt this. Bossuet, in his famous *Discourse on Universal History*, insists on 'the concatenation of the universe,' and urges that the true object of history is to observe in connection with each epoch the secret dispositions of events that prepared the way for great changes, as well as the momentous conjectures which more immediately brought them to pass; and, though Bossuet's history is arbitrary and one-sided enough, he launched effectually a fertile idea. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Kant, Turgot, Condorcet, Hegel, and many others, all felt the same intellectual necessity, and made more philosophic attempts to meet it. Comte went far more elaborately and systematically to work than any of them, in uniting concrete to abstract examination of the long movement that ends in the modern world.

Among the competing theories of human history, men will choose their own, or rather in most cases they will let accident choose for them. There is less difference between them for this particular object, than controversial passion might suppose.

Bossuet found the key to events in a Divine Providence, controlling and overruling the course of human destinies by a constant exercise of super-human will. Comte ascribed a hardly less resistible power to a Providence of his own construction, directing present events along a groove cut ever more and more deeply for them by the past, and even pushing the influence of past over present to the singular and soul-destroying paradox that the living are ruled by the dead. Whether you accept Bossuet's theory or Comte's theory of the law and governance of the world, of the social union, of change, progress, and the ebb and flow of civilisation, in either case, whether men be their own Providence, or no more than instruments and secondary agents in the hands and for the purposes of '*die unbekannten höheren Wesen, die wir ahnen*',* this classification of the operations of either Providence equally deserves study and meditation. Earthly fame, says the poet, is nothing else but a breath of wind, 'the unknown higher beings that we yearn for'; and, as the wind is called Seirocco, Tramontana, Libeccio, Greco, according as it blows from one point or another, so Fame picks out her diverse names to celebrate, and the same wind has different power and is differently

* 'Heil den unbekannten
Höheren Wesen,
Die wir ahnen.'

GOETHE'S *Das Göttliche*.

known in diverse lands. The merit of such an attempt as this is that it supplies principles by which to bring order into the *Æolian* confusion, to measure famous names, to restrain random incontinence of praise and blame, and at the same time in a systematic scheme 'to impress on the mind of our age the characteristic qualities of various types of civilisation and of human energy and thought.'

Its writers will not expect, and do not intend, the present volume to fill the space in men's minds that was once for so many ages occupied by the Menologies and Hagiologies of the Christian Church. Saints crowded into the ecclesiastical calendar with dangerous profusion, and the legends of their lives were worked up into a gigantic system of popular mythology, which, as Gibbon says, so obscured the simple theology of primitive believers as visibly to tend to a restoration of the old reign of polytheism. Yet these legendary biographies, calculated as they were to impair the sublime austerity of monotheism, still had a good side. 'In contrast with the rudeness and selfishness which generally prevailed, they presented examples which taught a spirit of gentleness and self-sacrifice, of purity, of patience, of love to God and man, of disinterested toil, of forgiveness of enemies, of kindness to the poor and the oppressed. The concluding part of the legend exhibited the saint triumphant after his earthly troubles, yet still interested in his brethren who

were engaged in the struggle of life, and manifesting his interest by interpositions in their behalf.*

We may doubt whether any such place will ever be taken by these new heroes. Nor can one wish the book to be so effective as to induce the general public to date its letters, for example, 28 *Descartes (Hume)* 103, instead of November 4, 1891. Life is too short for these innovations. Then the competition of the secular romance, as has been caustically remarked, which came in with the seventeenth century, threw hagiography and martyrology into the shade; and we cannot suppose that the rationalised and scientific hagiography of the present volume will compete on equal terms with the vast and exuberant growth of modern fiction. Yet the wonderful spectacle offered by such a narrative, of all the toil, wisdom, love, faith, illumination of intellect and of soul, that have gone to building the social home of the most forward portions of our race, will not be found without an edification and inspiration of its own.

It is not to be expected that everybody will be satisfied with the distribution of the honours of canonisation. Mr. Harrison thinks that, as to at least five hundred names in the whole list, competent authorities would probably agree; and as to the remainder, critics and objectors would differ as much from one another as from Comte. It may be so. The opening division, Theocratic Civilisation,

* Robertson's *History of the Christian Church*, Bk. iv. chap. ix.

will strike some as being what Cromwell is supposed to have called the law of England,—a tortuous and ungodly jumble; but the field is in its nature obscure, and has been opened mainly since Comte's time. This is not the place for discussing the large question whether Comte was right or wrong in excluding the Protestant reformers from his list. To many of us it has always appeared a disastrous omission that the form of faith which has directed, and to this day, in spite of the change in the ancient theological spirit, still directs the lives of so many communities all over the world, should be passed by as a mere solvent and an aberration. 'Protestant theologians, such as Luther and Calvin,' we are told (p. 247), 'are not in this Calendar: since the positive and even the negative results of the Intellectual Revolution in Protestant countries are best exhibited by systematic thinkers like Bacon and Hobbes, and practical statesmen like William the Silent and Cromwell.' We may notice in passing that William Penn and George Fox have a place, and nobody will grudge to either of them his canonisation, or deny the principle on which they are admitted — namely, that the Quaker faith has 'rendered eminent temporary service in England and America.' Even Voltaire, after his memorable visit to England in 1725, did handsome justice to the graces and virtues of Quakerism. But taking the Positivist point of view, can we hold that the Quakers are the only Protestants who

have rendered eminent temporary service to society and mankind in Great Britain and in America ? If George Fox has a good title, why not John Wesley ? A principal claim made for Catholicism throughout this volume is that over many ages, even amid the decline of theology, it has had charge of morals. Perhaps, in any such claim, Catholicism is used in its larger sense for Christianity as a whole ; still, in any case, the assertion that the Protestant form of Christianity has had charge of morals, is just as true in the same sense as the same assertion about the Romish form. If that task, whatever it may amount to, has fallen to one church in Catholic countries, it has fallen in the same sense to other churches in Protestant countries. The precise value of the service may be different, and the exact degree of success may be unequal, if anybody chooses to say so ; but the service is in aim and quality the same. Whatever may be the relations of such a doctrine as Justification by Faith to the intellectual revolution of modern times, what is not to be denied is that, with all its divisions and all its defects, the evangelical movement, in which Wesley is the greatest name, unquestionably effected a great moral revolution in England.* Surely to wage war against the slave-trade was to render a pretty 'eminent service to England and America.' Wesley was one of its earliest and strongest opponents, and the historian must record

* Lecky, *Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. ch. ix.

that both the onslaught upon the slave-trade, and the other remarkable philanthropic efforts towards the last quarter of the last century, arose in, and owed their importance to, the great evangelical movement, of which this Calendar fatally omits to take any account. If Catholicism is to be judged, not as a body of doctrines but as a social force, why not Protestantism also ?

To omit Calvin from the forces of Western evolution is to read history with one eye shut. To say that Hobbes and Cromwell stand for the positive results of the intellectual revolution in Protestant countries, and that Calvin does not, is to ignore what the Calvinistic churches were, and what they have done for moral and social causes in the old world and in the new. Hobbes and Cromwell were giants in their several ways, but if we consider their powers of binding men together by stable association and organisation, their permanent influence over the moral convictions and conduct of vast masses of men for generation after generation, the marks that they have set on social and political institutions wherever the Protestant faith prevails, from the country of John Knox to the country of Jonathan Edwards, can we fail to see that, compared with Calvin, not in capacity of intellect, but in power of giving formal shape to a world, Hobbes and Cromwell are hardly more than names writ in water ? As a learned man with a right to be heard has put it: — ‘ The Protestant movement was saved

from being sunk in the quicksands of doctrinal dispute chiefly by the new moral direction given to it in Geneva. The religious instinct of Calvin discerned the crying need of human nature to be a social discipline rather than a metaphysical correctness. The scheme of polity which he contrived, however mixed with the erroneous notions of his day, enforced at least the two cardinal laws of human society —viz. self-control as the foundation of virtue, self-sacrifice as the condition of the common weal. . . . It was a rude attempt, indeed, but then it was the first which the modern times had seen, to combine individual and equal freedom with strict self-imposed law; to found society on the common endeavour after moral perfection. The Christianity of the Middle Ages had preached the base and demoralising surrender of the individual; the surrender of his understanding to the Church; of his conscience to the priest; of his will to the prince. Protestantism, as an insurrection against this subjugation, laboured under the same weakness as all other revolutions. It threw off a yoke and got rid of an exterior control, but it was destitute of any basis of interior life. The policy of Calvin was a vigorous effort to supply that which the revolutionary movement wanted — *a positive education of the individual soul*. The power thus generated was too expansive to be confined to Geneva. It went forth into all countries. From every part of Protestant Europe eager hearts flocked hither to catch some-

thing of the inspiration. The Reformed Communions, which doctrinal discussion was fast splitting up into ever-multiplying sects, began to feel in this moral sympathy a new centre of union. This, and this alone, enabled the Reformation to make head against the terrible repressive forces brought to bear by Spain, the Inquisition, and the Jesuits. Sparta against Persia was not such odds as Geneva against Spain. *Calvinism saved Europe.**[†]

Yet Loyola and Dominie, forsooth, are to count among the great saving forces of the Western world, and Calvin is to be banished into limbo. Surely this is too hard for any canon of historic equity. For my own part, if I may not date my letters *Luther*, I positively decline to date them *Innocent the Third*.

The same deliberate limitation of vision — for it would be altogether unjust to ascribe it to constitutional narrowness of mind — that thrusts out even the social services of Protestant heresies in the West, excludes all mention of the services rendered to civilisation by the heretical heirs of the Roman Empire in the East. Mr. Harrison, for instance, describes it as the great glory of Charles Martel that he saved Europe from Islam, and stemmed the torrent of invasion both in North and South from Mussulman and heathen. But this is to leave out of sight what was the real and effective bulwark for many ages against Mussulman invasion. What

* Pattison's *Essays*, ii. 31.

says a profound and learned historian whose authority Mr. Garrison will be the first to recognise? 'The vanity of Gallic writers has magnified the success of Charles Martel over a plundering expedition of the Spanish Arabs (A.D. 732) into a marvellous victory, and attributed the deliverance of Europe from the Saracen yoke to the valour of the Franks. But it was the defeat of the great army of the Saracens before Constantinople by Leo the Third (718) which first arrested the torrent of Mohammedan conquest, although Europe refuses her gratitude to the iconoclast hero who averted the greatest religious, political, and ethnological revolution with which she has ever been threatened.*

Nothing but a settled prejudice against the Orthodox Church can explain the exclusion of all reference to the share of the Eastern Empire in saving Western civilisation. Hannibal is admitted, on what principle I do not profess to understand, for the victory of Carthage over Rome would have transformed the face of the world, and ruined that process of civilising incorporation which in Comte's eyes makes the name of Rome blessed for ever in the history of mankind. Why should Hannibal, who would have destroyed this great work, have his day in the Calendar, and Leo and Basil, who sheltered and saved the work, be left to perish from commemoration like the shadow of smoke? 'Without the history of the Eastern Empire of

* Finlay's *History of Greece*, ii. 19.

Rome,' says Mr. Freeman, to whom the doctrine of the unity of history as a living truth of daily application owes so much more than to anybody else in England, 'without the Eastern Empire, the main story of the world becomes an insoluble riddle. If there had been Turks at Constantinople in the ninth and tenth centuries, the names Europe and Christendom could never have had so nearly the same meaning as they have had for ages.'*

It may be said that Comte expressly designed his scheme for Western Europe. But then, why insert Haroun-al-Raschid, the immortal caliph of Bagdad, and Abd-al-Rahman, the greatest of the caliphs of Cordova? Because, we are told, the Arabian culture that flourished in their reigns excited a powerful reaction in the whole progress of Western thought, and because much of the learning, the arts, and the mechanical knowledge of the ancient world was preserved in the Arab university of Cordova. That is quite true, but nobody knows better than some of the writers of this volume how much more was preserved at Constantinople. The mighty Gibbon did less than justice to the part played by the Byzantine Emperors in saving Christian civilisation for so long from the arms of the Turks, yet he 'trembles at the thought that Greece might have been overwhelmed, with her schools and libraries, before Europe had emerged from the deluge of barbarism, and that the seeds of science

* Freeman, *Methods of Historical Study*, p. 111.

might have been scattered on the winds before the Italian soil was prepared for their cultivation.' (*Decline and Fall*, chap. lxvi.) The Byzantine system of government may have been essentially retrograde, and it may have been so from the cause that it had the fundamental vice of uniting temporal and spiritual power in the same hands. That is no reason, however, why the services of the Byzantines should be left out, nor would they have been, as one must suspect, if they had not been schismatic in the eyes of the Pope of Rome, and if the founder of Positivism had not felt bound to take up the Pope's quarrels along with the rest of his pontifical attributes.

Among the names which Englishmen will be prompt to miss are Elizabeth and Chatham. Yet Elizabeth, by the practice of a patient and long-headed sagacity in which she has not many rivals among statesmen, saved the independence of England, and Englishmen at least may be excused for thinking that such achievement ought to count for something in an oecumenical survey like the book before us. Mr. Beesly's volume on Elizabeth * is a masterly vindication—and vindication cannot really be needed in the eyes of his associates—of her claim to as high a place as Blanche of Castile, and to one considerably higher than her namesake, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. Then, as to Chatham, it seems hard measure to exalt Frederick the Great

* *Twelve English Statesmen.*

to the lofty pinnacle of the presiding genius over a whole month, and yet to grudge even a day of a week to the English minister who prevented Frederick from being cut into mincemeat—not to mention sundry other performances that in their ultimate effects have decided ‘the general course of civilisation,’ of which our Calendar here is the biographical manual, over the greater part of the habitable globe. Without Chatham the appearance of Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin in the Calendar is robbed of half its meaning; and it may be worth adding that Jefferson would have been very much surprised to find himself admitted to Paradise, while the unlucky French philosophers who inspired him with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and all the rest of his principles are cast without name, without fame, down into the Inferno as negatives, destructives, and revolutionaries.

Few selections are so hard to swallow as that of Frederick the Great as patron saint of Modern Statesmanship. Comte extols Frederick as a practical genius who in capacity comes nearest to Cæsar and Charlemagne. This in itself will seem a gross exaggeration to anybody who, with Napoleon’s exploits in his mind and the volumes of Napoleon’s correspondence before him, has ever realised the incomparable magnitude and strength of practical genius in that colossal man. Baleful as were the purposes to which he put it, who will place

Napoleon's practical genius on a level with Frederick's? The best modern opinion of Frederick on this side of his career is that, though a great soldier and an intrepid and skilful diplomatist, he possessed little originality in the fields of administration and organisation. Mirabeau said of Frederick that he was a great character in a great position, rather than a great genius raised by nature high above the common level. To take this measure of him is not to deny that Frederick carried out with heroic courage, persistency, insight, resource, and labour the work that was then appointed by circumstances for the ruler of the Prussian State. 'He maintained with invincible tenacity his father's idea of defending Prussia by the sustained energy of its people, called out and stimulated by the unsparing rigour of the government.' (Seeley's *Stein*, i. 175.) All that is true enough. But admire this performance as we may, high as we may place the qualities exhibited in the course of it, yet it was but a small task compared with the stupendous and world-embracing achievements, alike of statesman-like conception and of execution, which justify the writers of the present volume in saying of Cæsar that Shakespeare was not wrong in calling him the foremost man of all the world; and of Charlemagne that he formed the course of human civilisation, recast a world shattered by barbarian inursion, and founded Europe as an organic whole. Frederick had not been twenty years in his grave before the

work of his life was in ruins. Arbitrary energy is always superficially attractive; men overlook the confusion that it mostly leaves behind it. Frederick's duty was to preserve the independence of a very poor country without a frontier, and he succeeded. But it was Frederick's bad civil administration and the abuses and defects of his military system, that left Prussia open to the humiliation and overthrow of Jena and Tilsit.

Apart from the question of Frederick's practical genius, which assuredly was not second-rate, Comte gives him his prominent place in the Calendar as a dictator who furnishes the best model of modern statesmanship, and who, in accordance with the ideal of Hobbes—a very bad ideal it was from any liberal point of view—‘reconciled power and liberty.’ If we turn from these rose-coloured abstractions to the actualities of Frederick's government, we can find no proof of any such reconciliation. His rigours may have been justified by the exigencies of his kingdom, but it is idle to cover with fair words the harshness of a government that was in the strictest sense military and despotic. I cannot see how Napoleon was not as good an illustration of the bad ideal of Hobbes as Frederick, nor why Napoleon is to be excluded if Frederick is to be admitted, and not only admitted, but raised to the same high and special eminence as Aristotle, Charlemagne, Descartes, and St. Paul. Dictators have their place in the universal scheme, no doubt;

but one can only hold up one's hands in amazement when Frederick, who is more responsible than any one other European ruler of the eighteenth century for the spread of those principles of violence, fraud, and robbery which were only carried further by Napoleon, and were not begun by him, is held up as 'a precious and shining example of what purely human motives can effect when they are not weighted and warped by the rival claims of an imaginary object of love and adoration.' The more highly we appreciate Mr. Beesly's remarkably acute and masculine historic judgment, the harder is this particular eulogy to comprehend.

A very different figure from Frederick is Francia, the dictator of Paraguay, whom Carlyle, carrying his idolatry of force and brute-will to its most perverse height, made the hero of an only too well-known essay. Even the defenders of this execrable personage have, I believe, been obliged to plead insanity in extenuation of some of his most atrocious doings; and, sane or insane, it would be hard to find a man known to history less worthy of admiration, and he is least worthy of all, exactly from the Positivist point of view. Yet Francia, one of the cruellest of despots, figures in the week of Cromwell along with Algernon Sidney and George Washington! Rather than dedicate a day of the week to Francia, I shall decidedly stick to my old friends the Sun and the Moon, to Wodin and to Thor.

One of the most admirable of these little biographies is that of Byron. Mr. Harrison deals with a justice, courage, generosity, eloquence, and judgment that are more common in foreign than in English critics of this powerful man.

‘To judge Byron truly, we must look on him with European and not with insular eyesight. His power, his directness, his social enthusiasm, fill the imagination of Europe, which is less troubled than we are to-day about his metrical poverty and conventional phrase. To Italians he is almost more an Italian than an English poet; to Greeks he is the true author and prophet of their patriotic sentiments; and in France and in Germany he is now more valued and studied than by his countrymen, in a generation when subtle involution of idea and artful cadence of metre are the sole qualifications for the laurel crown. When this literary purism is over, Byron will be seen as the poet of the revolutionary movement which, early in the nineteenth century, awoke a new Renascence.’ (Page 362.)

I have not a word to say against this estimate, nor a word to add. Yet it makes one wonder why, if Byron is to be admitted to our pantheon, Rousseau should be excluded. Comte has used some bad language about Rousseau, and some of it is thoroughly deserved. But when you have exposed his sophistries, his delusions, his sentimentalism, his mischievous rhetoric, it still remains at least as true of him as it ever was of Byron, that his glow, his fervour, his power of effective inspiration, his feeling for nature, his sense of the true dignity of

man, awoke new aspirations and kindled a purer flame in the life of the affections and the heart. To treat Rousseau as all negative or destructive is to leave out one half of the sources, and one half of the results, of his social and popular influence. It is true that he was a revolutionary in Comte's sense, but then nobody could dream of denying, and Mr. Garrison does not deny, that the new element of lyric emotion represented by Byron is 'revolutionary in its origin and in its sympathies.' If Byron then is to have a day of the week to himself, why not Rousseau?

It is curious that, as Rousseau is shut out, the great man who despised Rousseau so intensely, and combated his theories with such persistency and power, should not be allowed to come in. One can see possible grounds, in framing a calendar, for the exclusion of either Rousseau or Burke, but not of both. We can well suppose that Burke would never have found a day in the terrible months of Ventôse, Nivôse, and Pluviôse. But why not in a Calendar for Positivists? The headless shades of Danton, Robespierre, and the rest of them may find some solace in knowing that their exclusion is shared by the author of the *Reflections on the French Revolution*; but that Comte, of all men, should have neglected the greatest conservative force in the literature of the revolutionary crisis, is indeed a surprise and a puzzle.

The equally striking omission of Wordsworth is,

I suppose, to be explained by the decision to include no contemporaries. Comte framed his Calendar between 1845 and 1849, and Wordsworth did not die until 1850. Exception, however, was made in favour of Rossini, who died in 1868, and Manzoni, who did not die until 1873; and Wordsworth is certainly a more indispensable name than either. No modern poet has more of the ideas that are in the Comtist scheme religious, and Comte, though his admiration for Dante shows him to have known fine poetry when he could get it, was tolerant even of mediocrity when it expressed his own thought—witness his admiration for the unmelodious oracle of Eliza Mercoeur, '*L'oubli c'est le néant; la gloire est l'autre vie*,' which, being interpreted, is that 'to be forgotten is the true annihilation; man's future life lies in being remembered with honour.'

The treatment of Ancient Poetry leaves something to be desired; and the days of the month of Homer are not nearly so genial as the days and weeks of Dante and Shakespeare. If there is a man in all the world who deserves a gracious, gentle, and affectionate hand, it is Horace. One is shocked to find this true-hearted and delightful poet snuffed at and scolded almost as if he were one of the impostors of letters. 'Having smothered his republican zeal with a hollow enthusiasm for the triumphant empire, his purely Roman work was reduced to opening the doors of the Pantheon to the cults and philosophies of all the world. He

emphasised the eclecticism which was the groundwork of the imperial socioocracy.' This is surely no way of writing about a lyric poet. He is 'the polished poet of expediency for all ages'; smooth and shallow is his poetry of love; his code is one of harmless selfishness; his love, 'like the rest of his faculties, lacked the fire of a devotion welding the fragments of morality into religion.' All this sermonising makes but a stale and weedy chaplet to adorn a poet's bust, and such a poet as Horace too—the very genius of friendship, of gaiety, of pleasant dalliance, of those social delights which Milton declared to be not unwise if we but spare to interpose them oft; and who, besides these infinitely graceful effusions of a lighter muse, yet could strike a grave and thrilling note when he praised Regulus or the just and tenacious man, and who, in his Satires and Epistles, takes a place among the first of those who have set forth the wisdom of life, including that vitally important part of wisdom which consists in not expecting too much either from life or from your fellow-creatures. How could it ever be the business of such a poet as this to 'weld the fragments of morality into religion'?

The same writer, one must add, who is so ungenial in raising Horace to his pedestal, does excellently by Ovid and Tibullus. But why did Comte make no room for Catullus in this most agreeable week? He is a far finer poet than

Tibullus. Half a dozen pieces of Catullus are the very gems of the lyric muse in the ancient world, if we may not add the modern world as well. The omission may have been a slip, and, after all, I am much more inclined to wonder at the completeness and comprehensiveness of Comte's lists than to complain of an exclusion.

Virgil receives a fine and glowing tribute, alike for his merits as a master of the poet's art and instrument, and for his vast influence over the mind and imagination of Europe during the whole of the Catholic period. But Lucretius, on the other hand, gets in comparison a somewhat curt and frigid portion; though, in sublimity, in boldness, in strength and sweep of imagination, and, I must even say, notwithstanding Mr. Harrison's talk of Virgil's 'matchless hexameters'—and matchless they are in finish, grace, and elaboration—yet in grand and solemn majesty of verse, and, above all, in penetrating insight into the awful realities of things through all time and all creation, Lucretius seems in many a passage to be as far above Virgil as Milton is above Spenser.

Some will be struck by the large number of names in the three months dedicated to poetry; but under the general head of 'Poetry' are included all modes in which the creative faculty of man expresses imaginative thought. Poetry covers epic, lyric, and romantic poetry; romances, chronicles, or meditations; even painting and

sculpture. This wide comprehension explains the fact that the Calendar contains no fewer than 127 names in the sphere of creative art, or very little short of one quarter of the whole 558. 'Such is the large part which Comte assigned to the imagination in the evolution of human society.' This shows a far wiser appreciation of the true proportion among the shaping influences of the world, than the ordinary political historian, or even the actual politician, is wont to dream of. Comte himself, as it happens, was not conspicuously endowed with imagination, though in this we cannot expect all his disciples to agree.

On this head, by the way, it is not easy to see why Froissart and Joinville should be placed under Modern Poetry, while Herodotus goes not into Ancient Poetry, but into Ancient Philosophy. Nor do I understand why Saint-Simon is left out, while Guicciardini is put in. Voltaire is admitted, but only to a subordinate place, as the author of plays like *Zaïre* and *Mahomet*. Nothing is said of his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, though it was not merely negative, but a truly positive contribution to the conception of history, and nothing is said of his sleepless humanity, or of his strenuous, lifelong protest against intolerance. So, in the case of Locke, surely we should have heard more about his writings on civil government and toleration. Locke's political or social liberalism was a more important factor in the 'concrete evolution of humanity' than

his Essay. Hallam truly says, whatever we may think of Locke's doctrine on government, it opened a new era of political opinion in Europe. 'While silently spreading the fibres from its root over Europe and America, it prepared the way for theories of political society from which the great revolutions of the past and present age have sprung' (*Literary History*, pt. iv. ch. 4). Of course Comte had a right to frame his Calendar in his own way; still it is perplexing to find the principles of tolerance and freedom on which the modern world, and in an increasing degree, subsists, coolly despatched as mere solvents, just as if they had made no positive difference, and no difference for good, in the elements of moral and social life.

It was almost inevitable, considering the purpose and inspiration of the work, that it should often have a note sounding rather like a note of excess. The object is naturally to magnify and to exalt, not to be balanced, measured, or merely judicious. The *Divine Comedy*, for instance, is hailed as 'the foundation of the Bible that is to be,' and we have no right to wonder, therefore, that Comte should extol it as 'the incomparable epic, which still forms the highest glory of human art.' In the region of Taste wise men should not waste time in quarrelling with other people's superlatives. But to those who know Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, the sentence just quoted will prove a terribly hard saying. When Mr. Harrison pronounces Dante to

be the peer of all poets in profound insight into character and life; to stand supreme in the 'sublime range of his theme, the sum total of humanity and nature, the past, the present, and the future—in the profound synthesis of all knowledge, and the ideal co-ordination of human society as a whole'—I cannot but remember that even so admiring and competent a student of Dante as Mr. Symonds finds it necessary to admit the presence of 'an irreducible element of prose in the very essence of the poem,' and to say, in irreverent language, that the great poet was terribly limited by 'the exigencies of his frostbitten allegory and his rigid methodistical theology.' Why not be content to love Dante for his exquisite observation of the most beautiful things in nature; for the incomparable directness and intensity that enables him to make 'his verse hold itself aright by mere force of noun and verb without an epithet'; for the sort of geometric reality with which, as Sainte-Beuve says, he renders the invisible, and by which he recalls some of the austere genius of Paseal; for his sublimity; his mixture of tenderness and pity with a rhadamanthine severity, not seldom deserving to be called by a harsher name; for his ethical integrity? For all this mankind, who may be said in this century to have rediscovered Dante, will take care not to lose him again from among the objects of their perpetual gratitude and affection. But if we praise him above all other men and poets for his insight 'into

the sum total of humanity,' what is there left for us to say about Shakespeare? This demurrer to an aesthetic overestimate is not presumptuously to disparage Dante's supreme place as the noblest monument of the Middle Age. Shelley puts Homer as the first, Dante as the second, of epic poets; 'that is, the second poet the series of whose creations have a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived and of the ages which followed it.' This defined and intelligible relation undoubtedly exists in the work of Dante, and amply warrants Mr. Harrison's description of the 'Vision' as summing up the spirit, the knowledge, the religion of the mediæval epoch, and bringing the whole range of Catholic Feudalism before our eyes.

In connection with Dante's 'Vision' a remark may be made on another work of fame as wide, and of far more nearly universal popularity and acceptance, the *Imitatio Christi*. This memorable product of the piety of some devout, strong, and sincere soul in the fifteenth century is one of the sacred books of the Positivist library. 'The conclusive test of experience,' said Comte, 'induces us to recommend above all the daily reading of the sublime, if incomplete, effort of à Kempis, and the incomparable epic of Dante. More than seven years have passed since I have read each morning a chapter of the one, each evening a canto of the other, never ceasing to find new beauties previously unseen,'

never ceasing to gather new fruits, intellectual or moral.'

It is true, as is said here, that the *Imitatio* is a book available for all men; but does the reason given quite accurately hit the mark? It partly depends on our definition of Religion. Mr. Harrison has said somewhere that 'the substance and crown of religion is to answer the question, What is my duty in the world? Duty, moral purpose, moral improvement is the last word and deepest word of Religion. Religion is summed up in Duty.' One could not undertake to examine this overwhelming little sentence in less than a volume. Meanwhile Goethe appears to come nearer the truth. 'All religions have one aim: to make man accept the inevitable.' Resignation and Renunciation — not sullen nor frigid, nor idle nor apathetic, but open, benign, firm, patient, very pitiful and of tender mercy — is not this what we mean by piety? Duty does not cover nor comprehend it. Duty is more, and it is less. We are told that, historically considered, the *Imitatio* is to be viewed as a final summary of the moral wisdom of Catholicism; that it is a picture of man's moral nature; that it continually presents personal moral improvement as the first and constant aim for every individual. I do not say that any of this is untrue, but is moral the right word? Is not the sphere of these famous meditations the spiritual rather than the moral life, and their aim the attainment of holiness rather

than moral excellence? As, indeed, another writer under the same head better expresses it, is not their inspiration 'the yearning for perfection — the consolation of the life out of self'? By Holiness do we not mean something different from virtue? It is not the same as duty; still less is it the same as religious belief. It is a name for an inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul, by which, though knowing of earthly appetites and worldly passions, the spirit, purifying itself of these, and independent of all reason, argument, and the fierce struggles of the will, dwells in living, patient, and confident communion with the seen and the unseen Good. In this region, not in ethics, moves the *Imitatio*. But we are being drawn into matters that are too high for a mere *causerie* like this, and far too high for the present writer either here or anywhere.

JOHN STUART MILL: AN ANNIVERSARY



JOHN STUART MILL: AN ANNIVERSARY *

It was no bad usage of the old Romans to bring down from its niche the waxen image of an eminent ancestor on the anniversary of his natal day, and to recall his memory and its lineaments, even though time and all its wear and tear should have sprinkled a little dust or chipped a feature. Nor was the Alexandrian sage unwise who deemed himself unworthy of a birthday feast, and kept its very date strictly secret, yet sacrificed to the gods and entertained his friends on the birthdays of Socrates and Plato. Nobody would have been more severely displeased than Mill at an attempt to exalt him to a level in the empyrean with those two immortal shades; yet he was of the Socratic household. He was the first guide and inspirer of a generation that has now all but passed away; and it may perhaps be counted among the *solemnia pietatis*, the feasts and offices of grateful recollection, in an Easter holiday from more clamorous things, to muse for a day upon the teacher who was born on the twentieth of May a hundred years ago.

* Born May 20, 1806; died May 8, 1873. This *causerie* appeared in the *Times*, May 18, 1906.

Mill was once called by Mr. Gladstone the saint of rationalism, and the designation was a happy one. The canonisation of a saint in the Roman communion is preceded by the dozen or more preliminary steps of beatification; and the books tell us that the person to be beatified must be shown to have practised in a signal degree the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and the four cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Courage, and Temperance. I think Mill would emerge in perfect safety from such an inquisition, on any rational or rationalistic interpretation of those high terms; nor need we be at all afraid that the *advocatus diaboli* will find fatal flaws in any disposition that time's unkind hand may bring to light. His life was true to his professions, and was no less tolerant, liberal, unselfish, singleminded, high, and strenuous, than they were.

Nobody who claims to deal as a matter of history with the intellectual fermentation between 1840 and 1870 or a little longer, whatever value the historian may choose to set upon its products, can fail to assign a leading influence to Mill. One of the choicest spirits of our age, for example, was Henry Sidgwick, and he has told how he began his study of philosophy with the works of Mill, 'who, I think, had attained the full height (1860) of that remarkable influence which he exercised over youthful thought, and perhaps I may say the thought of the country generally, for a period of some years.'

‘No one thinker, so far as I know, has ever had anything like equal influence in the forty years or so that have elapsed since Mill’s dominion began to weaken.’ To dilate on Mill’s achievements, said Herbert Spencer, ‘and to insist upon the wideness of his influence over the thought of his time, and consequently over the action of his time, seems to me superfluous.’ Spencer was rightly chary of random compliments, yet he declared that he should value Mill’s agreement more than that of any other thinker. It would be easy to collect copious testimony to this extraordinary supremacy. One may recall Taine’s vivacious dialogue with some Oxford friend, actual or imaginary, in the sixties :—

What have you English got that is original? — Stuart Mill. — What is Stuart Mill? — A publicist: his little book on *Liberty* is as good as your Rousseau’s *Social Contract* is bad, for Mill concludes as strongly for the independence of the individual as Rousseau for the despotism of the State. — That is not enough to make a philosopher. What else? — An economist, who goes beyond his science, and subordinates production to man, instead of subordinating man to production. — Still not enough to make a philosopher. What more? — A logician. — Of what school? — His own. I told you he was an original. — Then who are his friends? — Locke and Comte in the front; then Hume and Newton. — Is he systematic? a speculative reformer? — Oh, he has far too much mind for that. He does not pose in the majesty of a restorer of science; he does not proclaim, like your Germans, that his book is going to open a new era for the human race. He walks

step by step, a little slowly, and often close to the ground, across a host of instance and example. He excels in giving precision to an idea, in disentangling a principle, in recovering it from under a crowd of different cases, in refuting, in distinguishing, in arguing. — Has he arrived at any great conception of a Whole? — Yes. — Has he a personal and complete idea of nature and the human mind? — Yes.

Though the reader, if he be so minded, may smile at this to-day, still it is a true summary of the claim then made for Mill, of the position generally assented to (by Taine himself among others), and of aims partially if not wholly achieved. Bentham founded a great school, James Mill inspired a political group, Dugald Stewart impressed a talented band with love of virtue and of truth. John Mill possessed for a time a more general ascendancy than any of these. Just as Macaulay's Essays fixed literary and historical subjects for the average reader, so the writings of Mill set the problems and defined the channels for people with a taste for political thinking and thinking deeper than political. He opened all the ground, touched all the issues, posed all the questions in the spheres where the abstract intellects of men must be most active. It is true, Mill's fame and influence are no longer what they were. How should they be? As if perpetuity of direct power or of personal renown could fall to any philosopher's lot, outside the little group consecrated by tradition. Books outside of the en-

chanted realm of art and imagination become spent forces; men who were the driving agents of their day sink into literary names, and take a faded place in the catalogue of exhausted influences.

The philosophic teacher's fame, like the statesman's or the soldier's — like the great navigator's, inventor's, or discoverer's — *è color d'erba*, is like the grass, whose varying hue

Doth come and go — by that same sun destroyed
From whose warm ray its vigour first it drew.

New needs emerge. Proportions change. Fresh strata are uncovered. Theories once charged with potency evaporate. So a later generation must play umpire. How should Mill be better off than Grotius or Montesquieu, Descartes or Locke, or Jean Jacques, or any of the others who in their day shook the globe, or lighted up some single stage of the world's dim journey? As is well put for our present case, a work great in itself and of exclusive authorship is not the only way in which original power manifests itself. 'A multitude of small impressions,' says Bain, the most sinewy of Mill's allies, 'may have the accumulated effect of a mighty whole. Who shall sum up Mill's collective influence as an instructor in politics, ethics, logic, and metaphysics? No calculus can integrate the innumerable little pulses of knowledge and of thought, that he has made to vibrate in the minds of his generation.'

The amazing story of his education is well known from his own account of it. In after years he told Miss Caroline Fox, whose 'Journals' are the most attractive of all the surviving memorials of Mill, 'that his father made him study ecclesiastical history before he was ten. This method of early intense application he would not recommend to others; in most cases it would not answer, and where it does, the buoyancy of youth is entirely superseded by the maturity of manhood, and action is very likely to be merged in reflection. "I never was a boy," he said, "never played at cricket; it is better to let Nature have her own way." ' He has told us what were his father's moral inculcations—justice, temperance (to which he gave a very extended application), veracity, perseverance, readiness to encounter pain and especially labour; regard for the public good; estimation of persons according to their merits, and of things according to their intrinsic usefulness; a life of exertion in contradiction to one of self-indulgent ease and sloth. But James Mill, when all was said, 'thought human life a poor thing at best, after the freshness of youth and of satisfied curiosity had gone by.' He would sometimes say that if life were made what it might be by good government and good education, it would be worth having, but he never spoke with anything like enthusiasm even of that possibility. Passionate emotions he regarded as a form of madness, and the intense was a byword of scornful

disapprobation. In spite of training, his son grew to be very different. John Mill's opinions on subjects where emotion was possible or appropriate were suffused by feeling; and admiration, anger, contempt often found expression intense enough. Nor did a hint ever escape him about life being 'a poor thing at best.' All pointed the other way. 'Happiness,' he once wrote, 'is not a life of rapture; but moments of such in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with a decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as the foundation of the whole not to expect from life more than it is capable of bestowing.' Even friendly philosophers have denounced this as a rash and off-hand formula, and they may be right; for anything that I know, analysis might kill it. Meanwhile it touches at least three vital points in a reasonable standard for a life well laid out. Mill had his moments of discouragement, but they never lasted long and never arrested effort.

He realised how great an expenditure of the reformer's head and heart, to use his own phrase, went in vain attempts to make the political dry bones live. With cheerful stoicism he accepted this law of human things. 'When the end comes,' he wrote to a friend in pensive vein, 'the whole of life will appear but as a day, and the only question of any moment to us then will be, Has that day been wasted? Wasted it has not been by those

who have been, for however short a time, a source of happiness and of moral good even to the narrowest circle. But there is only one plain rule of life eternally binding, and independent of all variation of creeds, embracing equally the greatest moralities and the smallest; it is this. Try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and circumstances being both duly considered, and then do it.' This responsibility for life and gifts was once put by Mr. Gladstone as a threefold disposition: — to resist the tyranny of self; to recognise the rule of duty; to maintain the supremacy of the higher over the lower parts of our nature. Mill had none of Mr. Gladstone's faith in an overruling Providence; but in a famous passage he set out his conviction that social feeling in men themselves might do as well: —

‘This firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influences of civilisation. Men are under a necessity of conceiving themselves as at least abstaining from all the grosser injuries, and (if only for their own protection) living in a state of constant protest against them. They are also familiar with the fact of co-operating with others, and proposing to themselves a collective, not an individual, interest, as the aim (at least for the time being) of their actions. . . . Not only does all strengthen-

ing of social ties, and all healthy growth of society, give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others; it also leads him to identify his feelings more and more with their good, or at least with an even greater degree of practical consideration for it. He comes, as though instinctively, to be conscious of himself as a being who of course pays regard to others. The good of others becomes to him a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to, like any of the physical conditions of our existence. . . . In an improving state of mind, the influences are constantly on the increase which tend to generate in each individual a feeling of unity with all the rest; which feeling, if perfect, would make him never think of, or desire, any beneficial condition for himself, in the benefits of which they are not included.'

The failure of what he regarded as an expiring theology, made this exaltation of social feeling a necessity. One profound master sentiment with Mill was passionate hatred for abuse of power either coarse or subtle. Hatred of oppression in all its forms burned deep in his inmost being. It inspired those fierce pages against the maleficence of Nature (in the *Three Essays on Religion*), his almost vindictive indictment of Nature's immorality — immoral because 'the course of natural phenomena is replete with everything that when committed by human beings is most worthy of abhorrence; so that any one who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things, would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the

wickedest of men.' This poignant piece is perhaps the only chapter to be found in his writings where he throws aside his ordinary measure and reserve, and allows himself the stern relief of vehement and exalted declamation. The same wrath that blazes in him when he is asked to use glozing words about the moral atrocities of Nature to man, breaks out unabated when he recounts the tyrannical brutalities of man to woman. Nor even did the flame of his indignation burn low, when he thought of the callous recklessness of men and women to helpless animals — our humble friends and ministers whose power of loyalty, attachment, patience, fidelity, so often seems to deserve as good a word as human or a better.

The great genius of Pity in that age was Victor Hugo, and a superb genius it was. But in Mill, pity and wrath at the wrong and the stupidities of the world nerved him to steadfast work and thought in definite channels. His postulate of a decided predominance of the active over the passive, meant devotion of thought to practical ends. His life was not stimulated by mere intellectual curiosities, but by the resolute purpose of furthering human improvement. Nor had he the delight that prompts some strong men in dialectic for its own sake; he would have cared as little for this vain eristic, as he cared for the insipid pleasures and spurious business that go to make up the lower species of men of the world. His daily work at

the old East India House; vigorous and profitable disputation with a chosen circle of helpful friends; much travelling; lending a hand in reviews or wherever else he saw a way of spreading the light — such were the outer events. In all he was bent on making the most of life as a sacred instrument for good purposes. The production of two such works as the *Logic* (1843) and the *Political Economy* (1848) was drain enough on vital energy. They were the most sustained of his efforts. But he never desisted or stood still. His correspondence with Comte, to whom he owed and avowed so large a debt, is the most vivid illustration of the vigour and tenacity with which he threw himself day after day and year after year into the formation and propagation of what he took for right opinions.

He sat in the House of Commons for Westminster during a short and a bad Parliament (1865–68), where old parties were at sea, new questions were insincerely handled, and the authority of leaders was dubious and disputable. The oratory happened to be brilliant, but Mill was never of those who make the ideal of government to be that which consists ‘in the finest speeches made before the steadiest and largest majority.’ Fawcett, the most devoted of all his personal and political adherents, and at that time himself a member, used to insist that Mill’s presence in the House was of value as raising the moral tone of that powerful but peculiar assembly. At the same time

he could not but deplore the excessive sensitiveness to duty and conscience that made Mill nail himself to his seat from the opening of every sitting to its end. Mill would perhaps have had a better chance of real influence in our more democratic House to-day, than in that hour of unprincipled faction and bewildered strategy. As it was, members felt that his presence was in some way an honour to them, and they listened with creditable respect to speeches that were acute, well argued, apt for the occasion,^{*} and not too long nor too many. But, after all, Mill was not of them, and he was not at home with them. Disraeli is said to have called him 'a political finishing governess.' Bright, when privately reproached for dissenting on the ballot or something else from so great a thinker, replied in his gruffest tone that the worst of great thinkers is that they generally think wrong. The sally would have been ungrateful if it had been serious, for on all the grand decisive issues—American Slavery, Free Trade, Reform—Mill and Bright fought side by side. He was sometimes spoken of for the India Office when the time should come, and he undoubtedly knew more of India than all Secretaries of State ever installed there put together. But he had refused a seat on the Indian Council when it was first formed, for the reason that he doubted the working of the new system; and as it happened, he lost his seat in Parliament before the Liberals returned to power (when, by

the way, India was proposed to Bright). So we cannot test Mill by the old Greek saw that office shows the man. His true ambition, and a lofty one it must be counted, was to affect the course of events in his time by affecting the course of thought.

It is a curious irony that the author of the inspiring passage on Social Feeling above quoted should be a target for slings and arrows from Socialist sects, as the cold apostle of hardened individualism. As if the obnoxious creed in this, its narrow sense, were in those days possible to any reflective mind of Mill's calibre. The terrific military surge that swept and roared over Europe for quarter of a century after the fall of the French Monarchy in 1789, no sooner drew back from the shore than there emerged what we summarily style the Social Question. Catholic writers of marked grasp and vision entered upon the field of social reconstruction with Conservative sword and trowel in their hands, to be followed in due time by champions from within the same fold, and aiming at the same reconciliation, but armed with the antagonistic principles of Liberalism. In England Bentham and his school applied themselves to social reform, mainly in the sphere of law, with the aid of democratic polities. All that was best and soundest in Benthamism was absorbed by Mill. He widened its base, deepened the philosophic foundations, and in his *Logic* devised an approach to reform from a novel direction, far away from

platforms, cabinets, bills, and electioneering posters. 'The notion,' he says in his *Autobiography*, 'that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation or experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory every inveterate belief and every intense feeling, of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the obligation of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification. There never was such an instrument devised for consecrating all deep-seated prejudices.' The *Logic* was an elaborate attempt to perform the practical task of dislodging intuitive philosophy, as a step towards sounder thinking about society and institutions ; as a step, in other words, towards Liberalism.

In 1861 Taine wrote a chapter on the book, and Mill said no more exact or complete idea of its contents as a body of philosophic doctrine could be found. But he demurred to Taine's description of its psychology as peculiarly English, and Mill's words give an interesting glimpse of his own view of his place in the filiation of philosophy. The psychology was peculiarly English, he says, in the first half of the eighteenth century, beginning with Locke down to the reaction against Hume. This reaction, beginning in Scotland, long dressed itself in German form, and ended by invading the whole

field. ‘When I wrote my book, I stood nearly alone in my opinion ; and though my way of looking at matters found a degree of sympathy that I did not expect, there were still to be found in England twenty *a priori* and spiritualist philosophers for one partisan of the doctrine of experience. Throughout the whole of our reaction of seventy years, the philosophy of experience has been regarded as French, just as you qualify it as English. Each view is a mistake. The two systems follow each other by law of reaction all over the world. Only the different countries never exactly coincide either in revolution or counter-revolution.’

There is no room here to state, discuss, estimate, or classify Mill’s place in the stream of philosophic history. The volume of criticism to which he exposed such extensive surface was immense, and soon after his death the hostile tide began pretty rapidly to rise. T. H. Green, at the height of his influence in Oxford, assailed Mill’s main positions both in logic and metaphysic. Dr. Caird urged fresh objections. They multiplied. It was inevitable that they should. Those later writings of his which brought Mill’s vogue to a climax, appeared at the very moment when there broke upon the scene those overwhelming floods of evolutionary speculation, which seemed destined to shift or sweep away the beacons that had lighted his philosophic course. *Liberty*, for instance, was published in 1859, the very year of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. As one

of the most ardent disciples of the school has put the matter in slightly excited form — when the new progressive theories burst upon the world, Comte was left stranded, Hegel was relegated with a bow to a few Oxford tutors, Buckle was exploded like an inflated windbag, and ‘even Mill himself — *clarum et venerabile nomen* — was felt to be lacking in full appreciation of the dynamic and kinetic element in universal nature.’ Mill has not been left without defenders. One of them (Mr. Hobhouse in his *Theory of Knowledge*) holds that the head and front of his offending was that, unlike other philosophers, he wrote intelligibly enough for inconsistencies to be found out. Mr. Haldane, who regards the *Examination of Hamilton* as the greatest of Mill’s writings, vindicates a place for him as going far down in the deepest regions of ontology, as coming near to the old conclusions of the Germans long ago, ‘conclusions to which many writers and thinkers of our time are now tending.’ The third book of the *Logic* (on Induction) is counted by competent judges to be the best work he ever did. So far, the most elaborate exposition, criticism, and amplification of Mill’s work and thought has come from the brave and true-hearted Leslie Stephen, in one of his three volumes on the Utilitarians.

Whether Mill tried to pass ‘by a highway in the air’ from psychological hedonism to utilitarianism; whether his explanation of the sentence, ‘The

Marshal Niel is a yellow rose,' be right or wrong ; whether the basis on which he founds induction be strong or weak ; whether his denial of the accuracy of geometry has or has not a real foundation ; whether his doctrine of 'inseparable association' exposes the radical defect in the laws of association — these, and the hundred other questions over which expert criticism has ranged ever since his time, are not for us to-day. Even those who do not place him highest, agree that at least he raised the true points, put the sharpest questions, and swept away the most tiresome cobwebs. If the metaphysical controversy has not always been good-natured, perhaps it is because *on ne se passionne que pour ce qui est obscur.*

In point of literary style — a thing on which many coxeombries have sprung up since Mill's day — although both his topics and his temperament denied him a place among the greatest masters, yet his writing had for the younger men of his generation a grave power well fitted for the noble task of making men love truth and search for it. There is no ambition in his style. He never forced his phrase. Even when anger moves him, the ground does not tremble, as when Bossuet or Burke exhorts, denounces, wrestles, menaces, and thunders. He has none of the incomparably winning graces by which Newman made mere siren style do duty for exact, penetrating, and coherent thought ; by which, moreover, he actually raised his Church to

what would not so long before have seemed a strange and incredible rank in the mind of Protestant England. Style has worked many a miracle before now, but none more wonderful than Newman's. Mill's journey from Bentham, Malthus, Ricardo, to Coleridge, Wordsworth, Comte, and then on at last to some of those Manichean speculations that so perplexed or scandalised his disciples, was almost as striking, though not so picturesquely described, as Newman's journey from Evangelicalism to Rome. These graces were none of Mill's gifts, nor could he have coveted them. He did not impose ; he drew, he led, he quickened with a living force and fire the commonplace that truth is a really serious and rather difficult affair, worth persistently pursuing in every path where duty beckons. He made people feel, with a kind of eagerness evidently springing from internal inspiration, that the true dignity of man is mind.

We English have never adopted the French word *justesse*, as distinct from justice ; possibly we have been apt to fall short in the quality that *justesse* denotes. 'Without *justesse* of mind,' said Voltaire, 'there is nothing.' If we were bound to the extremely unreasonable task of finding a single word for a mind so wide as Mill's in the range of its interests, so diversified in methods of intellectual approach, so hospitable to new intellectual and moral impressions, we might do worse than single out *justesse* as the key to his method, the key to

what is best in his influence, the mastermark and distinction of his way of offering his thoughts to the world. Measure and reserve in mere language was not the secret, though neither teacher nor disciple can be the worse for measuring language. In a country where, as has often been said, politics and religion are the two absorbing fields of discussion, and where polities is the field in which men and newspapers are most incessantly vocal and vociferous, *justesse* naturally seems but a tame and shambling virtue. For if we were always candid, always on the watch against over-statement, always anxious to be even fairer to our adversary's case than to our own, what would become of polities? Why, there would be no polities. In that sphere we must, as it might seem, accept the dictum of Dr. Johnsen, that 'to treat your opponent with respect is to give him an advantage to which he is not entitled.'

If it be true that very often more depends upon the temper and spirit in which men hold their opinions than upon the opinions themselves, Mill was indeed our benefactor. From beginning to end of his career he was forced into the polemical attitude over the whole field; into an incessant and manful wrestle for what he thought true and right against what he regarded as false or wrong. One of his merits was the way in which he fought these battles — the pains he took to find out the strength of an opposing argument; the modesty that made

him treat the opponent as an equal; an entire freedom from pedagogue's arrogance. In one or two of his earlier pieces he knows how to give a trouncing; to Brougham, for instance, for his views on the French Revolution of 1848. His private judgments on philosophic or other performances were often severe. Dean Mansel preached a once celebrated set of Bampton lectures against him, and undergraduates flocked to Saint Mary's to hear them, with as much zest as they would to-day manifest about fiscal reform or the Education Bill. Mill privately spoke of Mansel's book as 'loathsome,' but his disdain was usually mute. A philosopher once thought that a review of his theory of vision was arrogant and overbearing. Mill replied in words that are a good example of his canons for a critic:—

'We are not aware of any other arrogance than is implied by thinking ourselves right and by consequence Mr. Bailey wrong. We certainly did not feel ourselves required, by consideration for him, to state our difference of opinion with pretended hesitation. We should not have written on the subject unless we had been able to form a decided opinion on it, and having done so, to have expressed that opinion otherwise than decidedly would have been cowardice, not modesty; it would have been sacrificing our conviction of truth to fear of offence. To dispute the soundness of a man's doctrines and the conclusiveness of his arguments may always be interpreted as an assumption of superiority over him; true courtesy,

however, between thinkers is not shown by refraining from this sort of assumption, but by tolerating it in one another.'

It was this candid, patient, and self-controlled temper that provoked the truly remarkable result — a man immersed in unsparing controversy for most of his life (controversy, too, on all the subjects where difference of opinion is aptest to kindle anger, contempt, and even the horrid and irrelevant imputation of personal sin), and yet somehow held in general honour as a sort of oracle, instead of having presented to him the fatal cup of hemlock that has so often been the reformer's portion. He really succeeded in procuring a sort of popular halo round the dismal and derided name of philosopher, and his books on political theory and sociological laws went into cheap popular editions. Like Locke and Hobbes, he propounded general ideas for particular occasions, and built dykes and ramparts on rational principles for movements that had their source not so much in reasoning in 'the world and waves of men,' as in passions and interests, sectarian or material, and in the confused and turbid rush of intractable events.

Among all the changes of social ordinance in Mill's day and generation, none is more remarkable, and it may by and by be found that none cuts deeper, than the successive stages of the emancipation of women. And to this no thinker or writer of his time contributed so powerfully as Mill. Much

of the ground has now been won, but the mark made by his little tract on the *Subjection of Women* upon people of better minds among us was profound, and a book touching so impressively the most penetrating of all our human relations with one another is slow to go quite out of date.

In political economy (1848) he is admitted, by critics not at all disposed to put his pretensions too high, to have exercised without doubt a greater influence than any other writer since Ricardo, and as an exposition of the principles on which the emancipating work between 1820 and 1860 was done, his book still holds its ground. Without being tempted into the controversies of the fugitive hour, it is enough to mark that Mill is not of those economists who treat their propositions as absolute and dogmatic, rather than relative and conditional, depending on social time and place. One of the objects that he always had most at heart, in his capacity as publicist, was to set democracy on its guard against itself. No object could be either more laudable or more needed. He was less successful in dealing with Parliamentary machinery than in the infinitely more important task of moulding and elevating popular character, motives, ideals, and steady respect for truth, equity, and common sense — things that matter a vast deal more than machinery. Save the individual; cherish his freedom; respect his growth and leave room for it — this was ever the refrain. His book on Representative Government set up the

case against Carlyle's glorification of men like Napoleon or Frederick. Within twenty years from Mill's death the tide had turned Carlyle's way, and now to-day it has turned back again. Then in the ten years before his death Neo-machiavellianism rose to ascendency on the Continent of Europe, and a quarter of a century later we have had a short spell of Neo-machiavellianism in England — end justifying means, country right or wrong, and all the rest of it. Here again the tide has now turned, and Millite sanity is for a new season restored. In the sovereign field of tolerance his victory has been complete. Only those who can recall the social odium that surrounded heretical opinions before Mill began to achieve popularity, are able rightly to appreciate the battle in which he was in so many aspects the protagonist.

In the later years, when he had travelled over the smooth places of a man's life and the rough places, his younger friends never heard a word fall from him that did not encourage and direct; and nobody that ever lived enjoyed more of that highest of pleasures, the pointing the right path for new wayfarers, urging them to walk in it. 'Montesquien must die,' exclaimed old Bentham, in a rare mood of rhapsody; 'he must die as his great countryman, Descartes, had died before him: he must wither as the blade withers when the corn is ripe; he must die, but let tears of gratitude and admiration bedew his grave.' So the pilgrim

may feel to-day, as he stands by that mournful grave at windy Avignon, city of sombre history and forlorn memories, where Mill's remains were laid a generation ago this month (May 1873). Measure the permanence of his contribution to thought or social action as we will, he will long deserve to be commemorated as the personification of some of the noblest and most fruitful qualities within the reach and compass of mankind.

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LECKY ON DEMOCRACY



LECKY ON DEMOCRACY *

WHAT is demoeracy? Sometimes it is the name for a form of government by which the ultimate control of the machinery of government is committed to a numerical majority of the community. Sometimes, and incorrectly, it is used to denote the numerical majority itself, the poor or the multitude existing in a State. Sometimes, and still more loosely, it is the name for a policy directed exclusively or mainly to the advantage of the labouring class. Finally, in its broadest, deepest, most comprehensive, and most interesting sense, Democracy is the name for a certain general condition of society, having historic origins, springing from circumstances and the nature of things; not only involving the political doctrine of popular sovereignty, but representing a cognate group of corresponding tendencies over the whole field of moral, social, and even of spiritual life within the democratic community. Few writers have consistently respected the frontier that divides democracy as a certain state of society, from democracy as a certain

* *Democracy and Liberty.* By W. E. H. Lecky. Two vols. Longmans, 1896.

form of government. Mill said of the admirable Tocqueville, for instance, that he was apt to ascribe to Democracy consequences that really flowed from Civilisation. Mr. Lecky is constantly open to the same criticism.

Whether we think of democracy in the narrower or the wider sense—whether as another name for universal suffrage, or as another name for a particular stage of civilisation—it equally stands for a remarkable revolution in human affairs. In either sense it offers a series of moral and political questions of the highest practical importance and the most invigorating theoretical interest. It has shaken the strength and altered the attitude of the churches, has affected the old subjection of women and modified the old conceptions of the family and of property, has exalted labour, has created and dominated the huge enginery of the Press, has penetrated in a thousand subtle ways into the whole region of rights, duties, human relations, and social opportunity. In vain have men sought a single common principle for this vast movement. Simplification of life; the sovereignty of the people, and the protection of a community by itself; the career to the talents; equality and brotherhood; the substitution of industrialism for militarism; respect for labour:—such are some of the attempts that have been made to seize in a phrase the animating spirit of the profound changes through which the civilised world has for a century and

more been passing, not only in the imposing institutions of the external world, but in the mind and heart of individual man.

We can hardly imagine a finer or more engaging, inspiring, and elevating subject for inquiry, than this wonderful outcome of that extraordinary industrial, intellectual, and moral development which has awakened in the masses of modern society the consciousness of their own strength, and the resolution, still dim and torpid, but certain to expand and to intensify, to use that strength for new purposes of their own. We may rejoice in democracy, or we may dread it. Whether we like it or detest it, and whether a writer chooses to look at it as a whole or to investigate some particular aspect of it, the examination ought to take us into the highest region of political thought, and it undoubtedly calls for the best qualities of philosophic statesmanship and vision.

If so much may be said of the theme, what of the season and the hour? In our own country, at any rate, the present would seem to be a singularly propitious time for the cool and scientific consideration, by a man trained in habits of systematic reflection, of some of the questions raised by Mr. Lecky's title. The English electorate has just called a halt to all projects of constitutional reform. The great orator and statesman who has for a generation been the organ and inspirer of popular sentiment in this kingdom, has quitted the stage of

public activity. Of the two historic political parties, though one is for the moment entrenched behind a strong parliamentary majority, yet neither feels perfectly secure against deep internal transformation, nor perfectly easy about the direction which that transformation may take. Victors and vanquished alike ostentatiously proclaim their supreme devotion to the cause of social reform, though the phrase is vague and its contents uncertain and indefinite. The extreme wing of what styles itself the Labour party, the Socialist party, or the Collectivist party, has for the hour suffered a signal repulse. Yet nobody with an eye in his head believes that the accommodation of old social institutions to a state of society in which the political centre of gravity has finally shifted, is a completed task, or that the gravest problems involved in that task are not left outstanding and inexorable.

Such a period as this is just the time, one would think, for a political philosopher to take stock of institutions; to trace their real working under the surface of external forms; to watch for subtle subterranean changes, to classify tendencies, to consider outlying or approaching difficulties, to seek solutions, and to do all these things with as much precision, directness, definiteness as the highly complex nature of the subject will permit. Precision and directness are not at all the same thing as dogma. As *Toequeville* has well said, the books

that have done most to make men reflect, and have had most influence on their opinions and their acts, are those where the author has not thought of telling them dogmatically what they ought to think, but where he has set their minds on the road that leads to the truths in point, and has made them find such truths as if by their own effort.

If the theme is lofty and the hour favourable, what of our teacher? Mr. Lecky has been removed from the distractions of active life, and though this has on the one hand the drawback of keeping him ignorant of many of the vital realities of his subject, it might on the other hand have been expected at least to keep him free from its passions. He has large stores of knowledge of other times and other countries, and he has been accustomed to expatiate upon the facts so accumulated, in copious and impartial dissertations. He might seem to be justified in his belief that studies of this sort bring with them kinds of knowledge and methods of reasoning 'that may be of some use in the discussion of contemporary questions.' In other fields he has shown qualities of eminent distinction. From him, if from any living writer, we should have expected firm grasp of his great subject, unity of argument, reflective originality, power, depth, ingenuity; above all, the philosophic temper. In every one of these anticipations it is melancholy to have to say that deep disappointment awaits the reader.

First of all, a word or two as to the form. Mr. Lecky has never been remarkable for skill in handling masses of material. Compare him for instance with Montesquieu: he will admit that the thought of the comparison is not uncomplimentary. Montesquieu subordinates the exposition of facts to the generalisation; detail and generalisation are firmly welded together; illustration never obscures nor blocks the central idea; two or three energetic strokes of the brush bring a mass of fact into true colour, light, and relation; in short, Montesquieu is a master of the art of composition. In these volumes it is very different. Great quantities of fact are constantly getting into the way of the argument, and the importation of history breaks the thread of discussion. The contents of an industrious man's notebooks are tumbled headlong down, like coals into the hold of a Tyne collier. I hesitate to pronounce these great quantities of fact irrelevant, because it is not easy to disentangle the author's thesis, to detect his general point of view, or to find a clue through the labyrinth of promissive topic and the jungle of overgrown detail. It is impossible to be sure what is relevant and what is not. With the best will in the world, and after attentive and respectful perusal, we leave off with no firm and clear idea what the book is about, what the author is driving at, nor what is the thread of thought that binds together the dozen or score pamphlets, monographs, or encyclopædic articles of

which the work is composed. Organic unity is wholly absent; it is a book which is no book. You might as well hunt for the leading principle of what is known in parliamentary speech as an Omnibus Bill. There is a pamphlet of forty pages on that novel and refreshing theme, the Irish Land Question. Thirty pages are filled with the minutiae of Local Veto. Five-and-forty pages go to the group of questions relating to the Marriage law: we have Roman concubinatus, early Christian marriage, the action of the Council of Trent, the case of Lord Northampton in the time of Edward the Sixth, and so forth through all the ages, down to the deceased wife's sister of the day in which we live, and the ex-Lord Chancellor who declared that if marriage with the sister of a deceased wife ever became legal, 'the decadence of England was inevitable,' and that for his part he would rather see 300,000 Frenchmen landed on the English coasts. This immense excursus is in its way highly interesting; it lulls us into a most agreeable forgetfulness both of democracy and liberty; but when we reach the end of it and recover the high road, we rub our eyes and wonder whither we were bound before being wiled into these sequestered bypaths. Then Sunday legislation covers twenty close pages; the observance of Sunday in the Early Church, the laws of Constantine and Theodosius, observance in the Middle Ages, Sunday under Elizabeth, James, and Charles, the Book of Sports, the Puritan

Sunday, and so on, almost down to the resolution of the House of Commons a few weeks since for the opening of museums on the first day. A distinguished ambassador was once, not very many years ago, directed by his government to forward a report on the *Kulturkampf* in Germany; he sent home a despatch of fifty pages, and apologised for not being able to bring things down lower than Pope Gregory the Seventh, but promised more by the next mail. Mr. Lecky is almost as regardless as the ambassador of the limitations set by time, space, and a definite purpose to the employment of human knowledge.

Worse than digression is platitude. Simplicity is the most delightful quality in literature, and nothing charms like the naïf. When the simple and the naïf degenerates, it turns to platitude, and that is in writing what insipidity is in the art of the cook, or flatness in a flask of wine. If the reader will begin to collect from these volumes a little anthology or *hortus siccus* of deliverances of this rather vapid family, he will find the number of well-marked specimens rising over the hundred in no time. For instance: 'It is in my opinion an exaggerated thing to prohibit harvest-work in the critical weeks during which the prosperity of the farmer so largely depends on the prompt use of every hour of fine weather.' And when he says of children brought up with excessive strictness in religious families: 'Being taught to aim perpetually

at a temperament and an ideal wholly unsuited to their characters, they fail to attain the type of excellence which was well within their reach. The multiplication of unreal duties and the confusion of harmless pleasures with vice, destroy the moral proportion and balance of their natures, and as soon as the restraining hand is withdrawn a complete moral anarchy ensues.' So 'depriving the people of innocent means of enjoyment, and preventing the growth of some of the tastes that do most to civilise them, it has often a distinctly demoralising influence' (ii. 94). Most true; excellent sense; but not startlingly new nor deeply impressive. As Rivarol said of his friend's distich, '*C'est très bien, mais il y a des longueurs.*'

Digression and platitude, though harmless in themselves, unfortunately tend to bulk. Mr. Lecky's object is not the very broadest, though highly important, being really and in substance not much more than to show the effects of popular government upon the rights of property. For this and the two or three allied or subordinate subjects he takes between nine hundred and a thousand pages. Mill's famous book on *Representative Government* was not one-third so long. Yet it sufficed for a systematic exploration of the most important part of the ground dealt with in these two volumes, and it left the reader with a body of thoughts and principles which, whether they are impregnable or not, are at any rate direct, definite, and coherent.

Maine's attack on *Popular Government* may not have been a very searching performance, but like Stephen's *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, it was sinewy and athletic; the reader knew where he was, and he came to the end of his journey in three or four hundred pages. A memorable sermon was preached on Mr. Lecky's text nearly thirty years ago; it was called *Shooting Niagara: and After?* 'A superlative Hebrew conjuror,' cried the preacher, 'spellbinding all the great Lords, great Parties, great Interests of England, leading them by the nose like helpless mesmerised somnambulant cattle,' had just passed the Reform Act of 1867 — Lath-sword and Scissors of Destiny; Pickleherring and three Pareæ alike being in it. 'Inexpressibly delirious seems to me the puddle of Parliament and Public upon what it calls the Reform measure; that is to say, The calling in of new supplies of blockheadism, gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, by way of amending the woes we have had from our previous supplies of that bad article.' These words would have made a concise and appropriate epigraph for Mr. Lecky's book, and I doubt whether the ordinary reader will carry away with him from this book much more than from Carlyle's summary damnation of democracy, and canonisation of aristocracy. Yet Carlyle only took fifty pages. But then Carlyle was a carnivore, and Mr. Lecky has been assigned to the slow-browsing tribe of the graminivorous.

If Mr. Lecky's literary method is bad, I fear that his philosophic temper must be called much worse. In our own generation we have all heard the continental ecclesiastic mourning or raging over the perfidies and robberies of the French Republic or the Piedmontese monarchy; the Southern planter swearing at the violation of vested interests which emancipated his negroes; the drone of the dowager or the spinster of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; the amœbean exchange of their wrongs between a couple of Irish landlords in the smoking-room at Harrogate or Pau. These are assuredly no examples for a philosopher. Mr. Lecky might have been expected to think of such a man as the elder Mill. J. S. Mill tells us that his father was the reverse of sanguine as to the results to be expected from reform in any one particular case; but this did not impair the moral support which his conversation and his very existence gave to those who were aiming at the same objects, and the encouragement he afforded to the faint-hearted or desponding among them, by the firm confidence which he always felt in the power of reason, the general progress of improvement, and the good which individuals could do by judicious effort. And the world has not yet wholly forgotten Mill's striking account of the good effects of his official position at the India House upon his own work as a theoretical reformer of the opinions and institutions of his time.

The occupation [he says] accustomed me to see and hear the difficulties of every course, and the means of obviating them, stated and discussed deliberately with a view to execution; it gave me opportunities of perceiving when public measures and other political facts did not produce the effects which had been expected of them; above all, it was valuable to me by making me, in this portion of my activity, merely one wheel in a machine, the whole of which had to work together. As a speculative writer I should have had no one to consult but myself. But as a secretary conducting political correspondence, I could not issue an order or express an opinion without satisfying various persons very unlike myself that the thing was fit to be done. . . . I became practically conversant with the difficulties of moving bodies of men, the necessities of compromise, the art of sacrificing the non-essential to preserve the essential. I learnt how to obtain the best I could when I could not obtain everything; instead of being indignant or dispirited because I could not have entirely my own way, to be pleased and encouraged when I could have the smallest part of it; and when even that could not be, to bear with complete equanimity the being overruled altogether (*Autobiog.* p. 85).

If the distinguished author of these two volumes had only cultivated this temper; if he had only ever been under the wholesome compulsion of working with other people; if, like Mill, he had forbidden himself to be indignant and dispirited because the heedless world insists on revolving on its own axis instead of on his; he might well have given us a contribution to political thought which

should be stimulating, enlightening, and even practically helpful. As it is, we move in an air of pitchy gloom. The British Constitution is plainly worn out. The balance of power within the country has been destroyed. Diseases of a serious character are fast growing in its political life. It is ruled by feeble governments and disintegrated parliaments and ignorant constituencies. Power has descended to classes who are less intelligent, less scrupulous, more easily deceived. Low motives are acquiring a greater prominence in English politics. Extension of the franchise makes a popular cry, and is so simple that it lies well within the competence of the vulgarest and most ignorant demagogue: it has sprung from a competition for power and popularity between rival factions; the leaders reckon that new voters will vote, for the first time at any rate, for the party which gave them the vote, and 'it is probably no exaggeration to say that calculations of this kind have been the chief motives of all our recent degradations of the suffrage' (i. 60). This genial and charitable explanation, by the way, seems a little summary, when we remember that the most persevering, eloquent, and effective apostle of the 'degradation of the suffrage' in our day was Mr. Bright, as upright and singleminded a citizen as ever adorned a State.

Then to attack university representation is, it would appear, a horrible fatuity. The assailants,

says the author, have rarely the excuse of honest ignorance. They are sycophants, who in former ages would have sought by Byzantine flattery to win the favour of an emperor or a prince, and who now declaim on platforms about the iniquity of privilege on the one hand, and the matchless wisdom and nobility of the masses on the other. Many of these declaimers, strange to say, are highly cultivated men, who owe to university education all that they are; they stoop, Mr. Lecky tells us, to the rant of the vulgar demagogue in order to attain personal ends of their own. 'I do not think that the respect of honest men will form any large part of their reward !' (i. 25).

Now was ever discontent so unreasonable? Some people might be excused for a little depression, if life were not too short for depression; but Mr. Lecky has no excuse. At what moment in the century was it easier to find balm for his bruised spirit? When were honest men more triumphantly avenged on the Byzantine sycophants? What more can the most self-righteous of pedants or patriots desire than the result of the general election of last July?* 'The country had now the opportunity of expressing its opinion about these men, their objects, and their methods, and it gave an answer which no sophistry could disguise and

* In the election of 1895 the Liberals, including more than one of their foremost men, were signally routed. They did not regain a majority for ten years.

no stupidity could misunderstand. The complete, crushing, and unequivocal defeat of the Radical party in 1895 is certainly one of the most memorable events in the present generation' (i. 362). 'The lesson was a salutary one,' for it proved beyond dispute the profound conservatism of the masses of the English people and their genuine attachment to the institutions of their country. 'It showed how enormously men had overrated the importance of the noisy groups of Socialists, faddists, and revolutionists that float upon the surface of English political thought like froth-flakes on a deep and silent sea' (i. 363). But is there not a whiff of the Byzantine sycophant here? What has become of the manly and austere words only two hundred pages before (i. 184), about 'canonising and almost idolising mere majorities, even when they are mainly composed of the most ignorant men, voting under all the misleading influences of side-issues and violent class or party passions'? The blessed events of one blithe summer week have happily transformed this mass of ignorant and passionate dupes into a deep and silent sea of innate conservatism and real attachment to the institutions of their country. But what, again, has become of the haughty lines about those contemptible beings to whom 'the voice of the people' as expressed at the polls is the sum of all wisdom, the supreme test of truth or falsehood? Nay, 'it is even more than this: it is

invested with something very like the spiritual efficacy which theologians have ascribed to baptism. It is supposed to wash away all sin. However unscrupulous, however dishonest, may be the acts of a party or of a statesman, they are considered to be justified beyond reproach if they have been condoned or sanctioned at a general election' (i. 184). Lo, now it seems that one of the most memorable party events of this generation does show that there is really some spiritual efficacy, some baptismal grace, some supreme test of truth and falsehood in the voice of the people as expressed at the polls, after all. While our philosopher is thus mercilessly bastinadoing us with his general election, we can only gasp out between his blows his own lofty words: 'Of all the forms of idolatry, I know none more irrational or ignoble than this blind worship of mere numbers.' And if it be really true that the noisy groups of Socialists, faddists, and revolutionists are in this country mere froth-flakes on a deep and silent sea of profound conservatism, then one wonders why three-fourths of this book were ever written. For the secret text of the book in the mind of its author is not very different from Talleyrand's saying: '*Democracy — what is it but an aristocracy of blackguards?*' If the lesson of the elections was so salutary for the vaulting revolutionary optimist, was it not a little salutary too for the querulous pessimist?

If it were a sign of a capacious or an elevated mind, always to fly for explanations of conduct or opinions which you do not approve, to the baser parts of human nature, Mr. Lecky would, as we see, occupy a very lofty pedestal. There the censor sits, passing magisterial judgments right and left, not merely on the acts — these are open to the world — but on the motives, of the most conspicuous, as of the humblest, men of his time. He pierces the secrets of their hearts ; he knows for certain when their ignorance is honest, and when it is dishonest, and it is almost always dishonest ; there is no room in his Rhadamanthine nature for considerations of mixed motive : nor for that strange dualism in men which makes them partly good and partly bad, sometimes strong and sometimes weak ; nor for thought of the hard alternatives, the grave and divided responsibilities, the critical balanceings in sharp emergencies and clouded situations, that press those who meddle with the government of men. All is intelligible, all is discreditable : all is simple, and all is bad. To pretend to believe that manhood suffrage might be a gain to the commonwealth, or that Mr. Lecky's countrymen are fit for self-government, or that a popular constituency is quite as likely to form sound political judgments as a miscellaneous band of Masters of Arts, is to mark yourself either as what has been described as a fool aspiring to be a knave, or else a 'new Jesuit,' an ignoble place-hunter, a trickster merely 'playing

a good card in the party game.' As for the adoption of Home Rule by British Liberals, and the monstrous enormity of a court for arbitrating Irish rents — introduced by the great betrayer, 'with uplifted eyes and saintly aspect' — Dante himself could hardly have found word and image to express the depth of Mr. Lecky's reprobation. Even the proposal of 1894 for restoring evicted tenants to their holdings was 'a scandalous instance of political profligacy.' The great Duke of Marlborough overheard a groom riding in front of him cursing and swearing at his horse. 'Do you know,' he said to a companion by his side, 'I would not have that fellow's temper for all the world.' Not for all the world would one share Mr. Lecky's conviction as to the mean, the corrupt, the gross and selfish motives of all these poor rogues and peasant slaves with whom his imagination mans the political stage.

The dolorous refrain recurs with terrible monotony. In one place the author is arguing the manifold blessings of hereditary aristocracy. A man who is not marked out in any way by his position for parliamentary distinction, he says, is more tempted than those of another class to make sacrifices of principle and character to win the prize, to be more governed by the desire for office or social distinction. The young patrician is less accessible than poorer men to 'the sordid motives that play so large a part in public life' (i. 315). As a matter of fact, has it ever been understood that in the working of Gov-

ernments, either peers or their elder sons or their younger sons or their relatives and connections of every degree of affinity — down even to their butlers out of service and cast-off valets — have been wont to show any indifference to the emoluments of office ? If one could compare the public money received by patrician ministers during the last hundred and fifty years, or even the last reformed fifty years, with the money received by plebeians, from Burke downwards, would not the first be as a giant mountain to a minute molehill ? But do sordid motives play a large part in our public life ? Where are we to look for them ? If they play a large part, they ought to be easily seen. Has there ever been a community in the civilised world where such a vast mass of gratuitous work for public purposes is done — work with no taint whatever of sordid personal object or motive, direct or indirect — as we see done every day of our lives in this island ? Parliamentary committees, county councils, municipal councils, school-boards, boards of guardians, asylum boards, quarter sessions — how singular and how unlucky must have been Mr. Lecky's field of observation, if what strikes him most in all these scenes of social activity is, not the devotion and the public spirit and the sacrifice of time and ease, but the play of sordid motives. In truth, this peace of disparagement, as a contradictory passage elsewhere shows, is a mere bit of thoughtlessness. But then, what is the use of a man being

a thinker, if he will not think? Bright once said in a splenetic moment, that the worst of great thinkers is that they generally think wrong. Mr. Lecky is worse still.

Then Mr. Lecky writes as if it were a happy peculiarity of 'the gentlemen' to make these sacrifices. He applauds 'a social condition which assigns to a wealthy class a large circle of necessary duties, and makes the gratuitous discharge of public functions the appanage and sign of dignity' (i. 318). As if this were in any special way the appanage and sign of dignity. As if the great mass of public functions gratuitously discharged were not so discharged by plain homely men, who neither claim nor profess any dignity save that which belongs to the faithful and honourable performance of public duty, whether it be done by cobbler or by duke. What more dignity does a man want, and what more can a man have?

The author has not even the merit of sticking to his text. While he thinks that the more Englishmen are admitted to political power, the worse that power will be exercised, yet at the same time, strange to say, he is persuaded both that the national character is good, and that it is every day growing better. Conspicuous improvement, he allows, has taken place in the decorum and humanity of the bulk of the poor; in the character of their tastes and pleasures; in their enlarged circle of interests; in the spirit of providence, and so

forth. ‘The skilled artisans in our great towns within the memory of living men have become not only the most energetic, but also one of the most intelligent and orderly elements of English life’ (i. 204). Just so; and this is the very element that was admitted to direct political power by the Reform Act of 1867, of which Mr. Lecky thinks so exceedingly ill. What are we to make of his reiterated assurances that since 1867 the governing power has descended to classes less intelligent, less scrupulous, and more easily deceived? If the ‘bulk of the poor’ are conspicuously improving, and if democracy has placed the decisive or prerogative vote — for this is what it has done — in the hands of one of the most intelligent and orderly elements in our national life, then, how comes it that, in face of all these admissions, Mr. Lecky insists, first, that the ignorance of the electorate is increasing; second, that the electorate is made all the more gullible, bribable, foolish, and incompetent, since the inclusion of these elements; third, that their inclusion is a degradation of the suffrage; and fourth, that their inclusion was not due to any spontaneous desire or demand of the intelligent elements themselves — who, we suppose, wished nothing else than that their betters should make laws for them — but to the factious competition of rival leaders (i. 59) and the vulgarest and most incompetent demagogues? Was there ever such a tissue of incoherence and inconsequence?

The author draws a picture of a kind of men loitering listlessly around the doors of every gin-shop—men who through drunkenness, or idleness, or dishonesty, have failed in the race of life. They are, he says, one of the chief difficulties and dangers of all labour questions. With a low suffrage, they become an important element in many constituencies. Their instinct will be to use the power which is given them for predatory and anarchic purposes (i. 20). But the broken loafer is no novelty in our social system, and any electioneering agent of either party will tell Mr. Lecky that this class in nine cases out of ten is the ardent supporter of Church and Queen, and, so far from being predatory, holds the very strongest views as to the righteousness of publican's compensation, for instance. To count these poor losels as a chief difficulty in labour questions, or as aspiring 'to break up society,' is ludicrous.

Still more remarkable is the following passage:—

It is very doubtful whether the spirit of municipal and local patriotism was more strongly developed either in ancient Greece, or, during the Middle Ages, in the great towns of Italy and Flanders or along the Baltic, than it now is in Birmingham, or Liverpool, or Manchester. The self-governing qualities that are displayed in these great centres, the munificence and patriotism with which their public institutions are supported, the strong stream of distinctive political tendency that emanates from them, are among the most remarkable and most consolatory facts of English life (i. 208).

The very facts that bring this consolation for the Sorrows of our political Werther, are facts that show that he has no ground for being a Werther at all. A town-councillor (with some qualifications of no bearing on the present argument) is the creature of the same degraded suffrage as returns a member of parliament; he is chosen by the same ignorant, unscrupulous, gullible, bribable voters; he is presumably exposed to the same low motives that, according to Mr. Lecky, everybody knows to be acquiring greater and greater prominence in English politics. Yet the town-councillor is enthroned on high for our admiration, a worthy rival in public spirit of ancient Greece, mediæval Italy, Flanders, and the free towns of the Baltic, while the same electors who choose such a being for local purposes, no sooner think of purposes imperial, than 'the highest self-governing qualities, vanish from their minds, and we have as the final result the wretched and unholy spectacle which Mr. Lecky now watches in melancholy mood every day at Westminster—much like the hapless country maiden whom, in the first of his pictures of a certain unfortunate female's progress, Hogarth represents alighting from the coach in wicked London, to find herself in the midst of a scandalous troop of panders and procuresses.

In passing, I should like with all humility to say a word for the House of Commons, of whose character Mr. Lecky thinks so meanly, whose power he is so anxious to fetter, and in whose permanence as a

governing institution he has so little faith. He writes as if the House were all rhetoric and tactics and bear-garden. It is nothing of the sort. 'No one,' he says, 'can be insensible to the change in the tone of the House of Commons within the memory of living men,' and he means change for the worse. Now the tone of an assembly is just one of the things about which a wise man will be slow to dogmatise, unless he has had a long opportunity of frequenting the assembly, feeling its atmosphere, and living its life. Tone is a subtle thing. You may judge a speech, or an Act of Parliament, or a piece of policy, at your own fireside, but you will never from that distance know enough of the tone of a legislature to warrant very confident assertions about it; and Mr. Lecky, as he says, and as we are all to our great advantage aware, has been for years 'deeply immersed' in the affairs of the eighteenth century. In truth this is a question on which the oldest parliamentary hands will perhaps think twice and thrice before saying either 'Aye' or 'No.' Men will judge for themselves. For my own part, after five-and-twenty years of experience, my strong impression is that in all the elements that go to compose what we may take Mr. Lecky to mean by tone — respect for sincerity, free tolerance of unpopular opinion, manly considerateness, quick and sure response to high appeal in public duty and moral feeling, a strong spirit of fair-play (now at last extended *bon gré mal*

gré even to members from Ireland) — that in these and the like things, the House of Commons has not deteriorated, but on the contrary has markedly improved. Moral elements have come forward into greater consideration, they have not fallen back into less.*

It is well to remember that, though the House of Commons is a council met to deliberate, the deliberation is for the most part by way of contention and conflict. This may or may not be the best way of getting the national business done, and of course it is accompanied all day long by a vast abundance of underlying co-operation. But contention is what engages most interest, kindles most energy, brings into play most force, is the centre of most effort. It may not be the most beautiful spectacle in the world — ceaseless contention never can be; it is not always favourable to the Christian graces; there is more serenity in a library, though for that matter books and bookmen have been ablaze with furious contention before now; there is more stillness in a cloister, though all is not sanctity, all is not exemption from strife and rivalry, even in a cloister. In the arena where material interests are touched, where deep political passions are stirred, where coveted prizes are lost and won, where power and

* The House of Commons chosen in 1906 contains a good many exponents of ideas that I do not happen to share, but in manners, and in the virtues above enumerated, it is the best of the seven parliaments in which I have sat.

the fleeting breath of a day's fame are at stake, where under the rules and semblance of a tournament men are fighting what is in truth a keen and not an ignoble battle, it is childish to apply the tests of scholastic fastidiousness. We have to take the process as it is, and I very confidently submit that it is now conducted, not with less right feeling, considerateness, elevation, talent, knowledge, and respect for talent and knowledge, than was the case in the memory of living men, as Mr. Lecky says, but with very much more of all these things.

It is only natural that where the main theory of the book shows so violent a bias, the same heated partiality should mark treatment of detail. I have only space for one or two out of a multitude of illustrations.

The power of arbitrarily closing debates, Mr. Lecky says, has been grossly abused. The only instance that occurs to him is the Home Rule Bill of 1893. Many clauses of that measure, he tells us, going as they did to the root of the Constitution, were passed without the smallest possibility of discussion. It has altogether escaped his impartial memory that the very same treatment which he thinks so shameless in 1893, six years earlier befell another measure that also went to the roots of the Constitution, for it empowered the executive government in Ireland, at its own will and pleasure, to deprive of trial by jury prisoners charged with offences in which the protection of a jury is in

England held to be most vital; and this power, moreover, was left in the hands of the Government in perpetuity. So, too, it has slipped from his recollection that precisely in the same fashion, or worse, was passed the Act creating the Parnell Commission, perhaps the most unconstitutional measure of its century, by which certain men were brought before a special tribunal, constituted absolutely at the discretion of their bitterest political opponents, and with the scope and limit of the inquiry determined by those opponents against the remonstrance and protest of the persons most deeply concerned. If the closure of 1893 was a gross abuse, what was the closure of 1887, and the closure of 1888?

Here, again, is a case, not of failure of memory, but of perversion of fact:—

The gigantic corruption which exists in America under the name of the spoils system has not taken root in England, though *some recent attempts to tamper in the interests of party* with the old method of appointing magistrates in the counties . . . show that there are politicians who would gladly introduce this poison-germ into English life (i. 129).

But is this particular poison-germ so recent, and has tampering with the appointment of magistrates in the interests of party never been heard of before? Let us look first at Mr. Lecky's own country. In that country, broadly speaking, and for the purposes of this argument, religious distinctions coincide

with party distinctions. The late Liberal Government appointed 637 county justices over the heads of the lieutenants of counties. Of these, 554 were Roman Catholics and 83 were Protestants. But let us see how the balance of the two religious communions stands even after this operation. The total number of justices on the benches of Irish counties up to July 1895 was 5412. Of this total, the Roman Catholics numbered in all no more than 1720, out of whom (including those added with the assent of lieutenants of counties) the Liberal Government was responsible for about 750. That is to say, finding that the old system had planted some 3700 magistrates of one party on the county benches, as against less than 1000 of the other, we made a singularly moderate effort to bring the balance a trifle nearer to justice and reason, by reducing the old ascendancy from being between three and four to one, to the proportion of rather more than two to one. And this is the step which, in a country where, firstly, the majority of two to one on the bench is a minority of one to three in the population, and where, secondly, the petty sessions court is the place where the administration of law and justice comes closest home to the daily life of the people — this is the step which our high philosophic censor describes as tampering with sacred usage in the interests of party, and introducing the poison-germ of the spoils system into our public life. Detachment of mind is a very fine

thing, but a serious writer should not wholly detach himself from the reality of the matter that he happens to be writing about.

In Lancashire, the Chancellor of the Duchy exposed himself to Mr. Lecky's benign innuendo by endeavouring to diminish the disparity between the two parties. How had the old method, which Mr. Lecky so admires, and which his party have now restored, actually worked? From 1871 to 1886 the percentage of Liberals to Tories in the appointments to the county bench was about 45 to 55. From 1886 to 1893 the percentage of Liberals was only 20, against 80 per cent. belonging to the opposite party or parties. Here, too, the poison-germ was older than Mr. Lecky thought. As regards England generally, Mr. Lecky ought to be glad to know that the Lord Chancellor, in 1892, found on almost every borough bench a great majority of Tory magistrates, even in places where Liberals were largely preponderant; yet in no single borough did he by his additions put his own party in a majority, nor in most cases did he even put it on an equality. As for the counties, the Chancellor left the Tories everywhere in a majority, and the total number of appointments of those who were not recommended by the lord-lieutenant of the county was extremely small. The 'new Jesuits' may really, like Lord Clive, stand aghast at their own moderation, and Mr. Lecky may stand aghast at his own gifts of heedless misrepresentation.

One of the strangest of his many stumbles is to be found in his story of the Indian cotton duties (i. 207). To illustrate the danger to India of our system of feeble governments, disintegrated parliaments, and ignorant constituencies, he mentions 'the policy which forbade India in a time of deep financial distress to raise a revenue by import duties on English cotton, in accordance with the almost unanimous desire of her administrators and her educated public opinion.' An agitation was raised in England, and 'both parties' feared to run the electoral risk. But is this true? Have both parties feared to run the risk? Mr. Lecky in the next sentence shows that his own statement is untrue, and that one party did not by any means fear to run the risk. For he goes on to say that the Indian Secretary of the day had the courage to insist on revising the false step, 'and he found sufficient patriotism in the Opposition to enable him to secure the support of a large majority in the House of Commons.' But the Indian Secretary was the member of a weak Government (and Mr. Lecky can hardly suppose that he took such a step as this without the assent of his colleagues, risk or no risk); he represents a popular, and therefore, according to Mr. Lecky, an ignorant, constituency; and he appealed successfully to a disintegrated Parliament. A more maladroit illustration of our woful plight could not be found.

As for the patriotism of the Opposition, it is

worth remembering that the gentleman who is now Indian Secretary, and who then spoke from the front Opposition bench, stoutly resisted the view that Mr. Lecky so rightly applauds, and he vouched in support of his resistance Lord Salisbury himself,* the head of the party—who does not sit for an ignorant constituency, but is Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and may therefore presumably be taken for a grand quintessential sublimation of the political wisdom and virtue of those Masters of Arts to whom Mr. Lecky looks for the salvation of our national affairs. Such a presentation of fact and of argument is really below the level of the flimsiest campaign leaflet.

Not seldom the sin of inaccuracy is added to the sin of gross partisanship. The author thinks, for example, that the abolition of the London coal and wine dues was a mistake. But he does not stop there. 'Not one Londoner in a hundred,' he argues, 'even knew of the existence of the small duty on coal which was abolished by the London County Council.' The London County Council could no more have abolished the coal dues, than it could disestablish the Church. That step was taken by Parliament, under the guidance of a Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, and with the full approval of those experienced official advisers to whom Mr. Lecky looks as the mainstay of decent administration. The new voters, after all, are not the only

* *Hansard*, February 21, 1895, p. 1354.

ignorant people who presume to meddle with polities.

In another place he remarks that, 'chiefly through the influence of the Socialist members of the County Council, that body has . . . brought back the system of "make-wages," or "rates in aid of wages," which had long been regarded by economists as one of the worst abuses of the earlier years of the century.' It has done this by 'fixing a minimum rate of wages, irrespective of the value of the work performed, and considerably higher than that for which equally efficient labour could be easily obtained.'

A more exaggerated, confused, and misleading statement could hardly be made. That the Council should make some mistakes at first was natural; but they soon repaired them, and at any time to talk of their bringing back rates in aid of wages is pure moonshine. The standing order requires that in works done by the Council without the intervention of a contractor the wages and hours 'shall be based on the rates of wages and hours of labour recognised, and in practice obtained, by the various trade unions in London.' Any contractor, in like manner, employed by the Council shall bind himself to conform to these same conditions as to wages and hours. The London School Board imposes the same conditions. The House of Commons has, by unanimous resolution, directed the Government to make every effort to secure the payment of such

wages as are generally accepted as current in each trade for competent workmen. Is all this, either in principle or practice, more than Mr. Lecky does for himself when he engages a servant ? He pays the servant, not the very lowest sum that would enable such a servant to keep body and soul together, but a sum regulated partly by custom, partly by competition, partly by his own idea of what is reasonable, kind, and decent. If Mr. Lecky had only taken the trouble to cross the floor of the House, Mr. John Burns or Mr. Buxton would have told him the whole story in a quarter of an hour, and saved him from making himself an illustration of the great truth, that nothing makes men reason so badly as ignorance of the facts.

The statement that the House of Commons 'had been, after the Revolution of 1688, the most powerful element of the Constitution,' is surely a mistake. Speaker Onslow used to declare that the Septennial Bill of 1716 marked the true era of the emancipation of the House of Commons from its former dependence on the Crown and the House of Lords. Nor did its emancipation at once raise it to be the most powerful element of the Constitution; among other reasons, because powerful members of the House of Lords were, in fact, the grand electors of a majority in the House of Commons. In fact, Mr. Lecky corrects his own error when he says (i. 310) that it was the Reform Bill of 1832 which fundamentally altered the position of the House of Lords

in the Constitution, deprived it of its claim to be a co-ordinate power with the House of Commons, and thrust it definitely into a secondary position.

It is incorrect to say (ii. 125) that licensing justices act under the supervision and control of the central Government. The central Government has no part in the business. If by central Government Mr. Lecky means the courts of law—rather an unusual construction—the magistrates are only under their supervision and control, in exactly the same sense in which any of us exercise our discretion in anything; that is to say, if magistrates break the law in licensing or any other business, they may be brought into court. To tell us this is to tell us nothing, and what Mr. Lecky says is misleading and incorrect.

One small error in contemporary history, it is perhaps worth while to set right. 'It is notorious that the most momentous new departure made by the Liberal party in our day—the adoption of the policy of Home Rule—was due to a single man, who acted without consultation with his colleagues' (i. 24). Whatever may be said of the first part of this sentence, Mr. Lecky must have been aware that the allegation that the single man acted without consultation with his former colleagues rests on mere gossip, and he must know that gossip of this sort is the most untrustworthy thing in the world. As it happens, the gossip is untrue.

The most rapid examination of the bitter prejudice and partisanship of the present work must include the episode of Irish land. The author's great ease in illustration of the tendency in a democratic system to what he calls class bribery, is the legislation of the last six-and-twenty years affecting Irish land. To this still burning theme he devotes, as I have already said, nearly forty pages, and pages less adequate, less impartial, looser as history, weaker as political philosophy, and blinder as regards political practice, it has not been my fortune, after a fairly wide acquaintance with this exhilarating department of literature, ever before to come across.

First, as to the history of the relations between the owners and the occupiers of land. There were 'grave faults on both sides,' says Mr. Lecky affably: 'Wretched farming; thriftless, extravagant, unbusinesslike habits in all classes; a great want of enterprise and steady industry; much neglect of duty, and occasional, though not, I think, frequent, acts of extortion' (i. 139). The ordinary ignorant English reader will suppose from these smooth phrases that 'all classes' stood on something like equal terms, social, political, moral, economic. The Irish landlord and the Irish cottier, before and for many years after the Famine, hardly stood on more equal terms than did the Carolina planter and his negro.

The Irish tenant, whose status was a desperate

status, and who clung with the tenacity of a drowning man to his cabin and patch of potato ground — what is the sense of talking of his wretched farming, his thriftlessness and extravagance, as if it were in some way on a par with the extravagance and thriftlessness of Castle Rackrent? And as for the wretched farming, who could wonder that the farming was wretched, when every attempt at improvement exposed the improver to a rise of rent as a consequence of it? Bentham said a hundred years ago that the Turkish Government had in his time impoverished some of the richest countries in the world, far more by its influence on motives than by its positive exactions. This is the explanation of the backward slovenly habits which Mr. Lecky sets down as a sort of counter-weight to the oppression, extortion, and neglect of duty which were in truth their cause. Nobody knows better than Mr. Lecky the real root of the situation which made land legislation of some sort an absolute necessity. It has been described a score of times, from the days of Arthur Young downwards, but by nobody more convincingly than by Sir G. Cornewall Lewis in that admirable book on the cause of Irish disturbances, which, in spite of its inadequate positive suggestions, one could wish that every public man, or every private man for that matter, who thinks about Ireland would take the moderate pains to master. Anybody can now see that a revolution was sooner or

later inevitable, as it was whether later or sooner thoroughly justifiable. Even before the Famine, Mr. Disraeli in famous sentences declared that it was the business of statesmen to effect by policy what revolution would effect by force.

Yet from one single point of view only, and from no other whatever, does Mr. Lecky allow himself or us to regard this striking, complex, and dangerous situation. It is intolerable to him that the statesman should introduce a single ingredient into his remedial plan, which cannot be obviously reconciled with the strictest and narrowest interpretation of the legal rights of property. He does not deny that there were cases where the raising of the rents led to 'a virtual confiscation of tenants' improvements' (i. 139); and a more impartial historian would find abundant evidence for putting it vastly higher than this. Yet he speaks with truly edifying indignation of the League appeals to the cupidity of the Irish electors. That is to say, what in the landlord is a noble stand for the rights of property, is criminal cupidity in the tenant who resents the confiscation of his improvements. 'To me, at least,' Mr. Lecky says in a singularly innocent passage, 'the first and greatest service a Government can render to morals seems to be the maintenance of a social organisation in which the path of duty and the path of interest as much as possible coincide; in which honesty, industry, providence, and public spirit naturally reap

their rewards, and the opposite vices their punishment' (i. 169).

This is impressive enough, and nobody will dissent from it. It is exactly what the Irish tenant said. This is the very service which, first in 1870 and then in 1881, Irish agitation compelled the British Government to 'render to morals.' How else could the honesty, industry, and providence of the tenant be rewarded, and the greed, idleness, and extravagance of his landlord receive its punishment, except by laws which protected the tenant in property which his own labour had created? The agrarian revolutionists were, on Mr. Lecky's own principle, the true moralists and evangelists, and the shame rests on the statesmen and the parliaments that made revolutionary action inevitable. It was the Land League that drove the Government to protect industry and providence by the legislation of 1881, and when Mr. Lecky talks in the ordinary vein of intimidation, greed, political agitators and the rest of it, he forgets the memorable answer of Sir Redvers Buller before the Cowper Commission. He was asked whether there was any general sympathy with the action of the League on the part of the people. 'Yes,' he answered, 'I think there is sympathy, because they think that it has been their salvation. . . . *Nobody did anything for the tenants until the League was established.*'* This is an old story, but it will

* Question 16494. November 11, 1886.

have to be told over and over again, so long as writers of authority like Mr. Lecky abuse the credulous ignorance of English readers.

Even the famous Act for the compulsory sale of encumbered estates is too much for Mr. Lecky. And, by the way, we wonder why he talks of that measure as having been put forward by the Whig party as the supreme remedy for the ills of Ireland. He must know Irish history far too well to be ignorant that Peel was much more truly its author than Russell, and that without Peel's energetic support it would not have been carried. But let this little perversion of history pass. He quotes (i. 151), apparently with agreement, a long extract from an eminent lawyer, describing the cruel injustice with which, under this Act, some of the most ancient and respected families in the country, whose estates were not encumbered to much more than half their value, were sold out and beggared by the harshness of the Liberal party. Let me quote a few lines from a writer whose authority and judicial temper Mr. Lecky will not be slow to admit. Speaking of the encumbered landlords dealt with under the Act, the late J. E. Cairnes wrote:—

It would be a mistake to regard these men—albeit their final overthrow happened to be accomplished by the famine and the measures which that event rendered necessary—as the victims of this particular crisis in Irish history. Like the ruin of the Jamaica planters, which, though consummated by the Emancipation Act and free trade, had

through half a century been steadily maturing under the pre-existing state of things—a state of things not very dissimilar from that which had prevailed in Ireland—the fate of this class of Irish squires had been sealed long before the famine, free trade, or the Encumbered Estates Court had been heard of. In the case of a large majority their indebtedness dated from an early period of the century, and was, in fact, the direct result of their own reckless and extravagant habits—habits, no doubt, quite naturally engendered by their situation. . . . The famine and the measures which it necessitated can only be regarded as precipitating an inevitable catastrophe, and the Act merely gave the sanction of law to what were already accomplished facts.*

Of course, in any work pretending to be of value in political philosophy or political history, the view of Cairnes would have been given along with the views of Fitzgibbon and Butt, that the reader might at least have a chance of knowing that there were two sides to the question. But Mr. Lecky is thinking of things a long way removed from political philosophy.

We must follow him a little further. He says that the tenants preferred making their improvements in their own economical, and generally slovenly, way, rather than have them made in the English fashion by the landlord. This is wholly misleading. The Irish landlord did not make the improvements because his tenants preferred their

* *Political Essays.* By J. E. Cairnes. Published in 1873, but this fragment was written in 1866.

own slovenly ways, but for the very simple reason that he could not make them. The holdings on an estate were so small, and therefore so numerous, that nobody but a millionaire could possibly have equipped each of them with buildings, fences, drains, as an English farm is equipped. This is the well-understood explanation of the difference between the Irish and the English systems. Nobody blames the landlord for not making the improvements. What he is blamed for is the extortion of rent for the improvements which the tenant made for himself.

Hence the absurdity of the statement that among other effects of the legislation of 1881, it has withdrawn the whole rental of Ireland from the improvement of the soil, 'as the landlord can have no further inducement or obligation to spend money on his estate' (i. 167). With rare exceptions it is notorious, and the Select Committee of 1894 only brought it into clearer light, that the landlord scarcely ever felt this inducement and obligation, any more than he feels it now.

Not any less absurd are the other items in the catalogue of disasters alleged to be due to the legislation of 1881. 'In a poor country, where increased capital, improved credit, and secure industry are the greatest needs, it has shaken to the very basis the idea of the sanctity and obligation of contract; made it almost impossible to borrow any considerable sum on Irish land; effectually

stopped the influx of English gold; has reacted powerfully upon trade,' and so forth (i. 167). There is the familiar accent of the *émigré* in every line of this. *Ils prennent leurs souvenirs pour des droits*, and then because they have had their claws clipped, they vow that the country is ruined. 'Secure industry' is indeed, as the author truly says, one of the greatest of Irish needs; but security in the one great industry of the island is exactly what the Act of 1881 aimed at, and in a very considerable degree, in spite of defects brought to light by experience, has actually achieved. As for the terrible reaction upon trade, Mr. Lecky must live with his eyes shut to the most patent facts in the state of commercial Ireland for the last three or four years. Never have Irish railways and banks been so prosperous as they are to-day, after this Act has been for fifteen years impoverishing and demoralising the country. As for 'driving much capital out of the land,' one would like to have some definite evidence of the extent of any such process. And as for the impossibility of borrowing any considerable sum on Irish land, one would like to know first whether the owner can borrow any considerable sum on a great deal of English land; second, whether the considerable sums that were borrowed in times past on Irish land ever did any good either to the landowner or to anybody else, or whether the old facility of borrowing money to be squandered in riotous and swaggering folly, has

not been the worst of all the many curses of Ireland.

To probe these forty pages on Irish land would need as many pages more. So let us pass on. The rigour and inelasticity of Mr. Lecky's conception of the institution of Property prevent his chapter on Socialism from being a contribution of any real importance to that subject. His commonplace books supply an account of the more influential Socialist writers, but he submits them to no searching criticism, and he plants himself on ground which deprives him of real influence over anybody's mind upon the controversy. He talks, for instance (ii. 304), of the sense of right and wrong being the basis of respect for property and for the obligation of contract. This will never do. It begs the whole question. The Socialist believes that he can make an unanswerable case the other way, namely for the proposition that the unsophisticated sense of right and wrong, so far from being the root of respect for property, is hostile to it, and is at this moment shaking it to its foundation all over the modern world. After the parliamentary reform of 1867, Mill with his usual patient sagacity foresaw, and began a series of systematic speculations upon the strength of foreseeing, that as the new electorate are not engaged by any peculiar interest of their own to the support of property as it is, least of all to the support of the inequalities of property, therefore henceforth, wherever the power of the

new electorate reaches, the laws of property will no longer be able to depend upon motives of a mere personal character, operating on the minds of those who have control over the government. The classes, he observed, which the present system of society makes subordinate, have little reason to put faith in any of the maxims which the same system of society may have established as principles. All plans for attaining the benefits aimed at by the institution of property without its inconveniences, should be examined with candour, and not prejudged as absurd or impracticable.* Mr. Lecky does little more than what the writer of those few pages of such calm gravity particularly warned us not to do. He only confronts prejudice with prejudice, and leaves the battle to be fought out between 'ignorant change and ignorant opposition to change.'

Socialism brings us to Militarism. Undoubtedly one of the most remarkable of all the circumstances of the democratic dispensation, however we put it, is its failure as a guarantee of international peace. Mr. Lecky says that there is a growing feeling in the most civilised portions of Europe in favour of universal military service (i. 256). Some publicists here and there may have vamped up afresh the plausible sophisms glorifying the noble effects upon character of the little ground, the barrack, the battlefield, but the signs are few that nations follow

* *Fortnightly Review*, February, March, April, 1879. 'Chapters on Socialism.'

them or agree with them. And Mr. Lecky himself has noted the decisive evidence against his own statement. After an elaborate exposition of the case for the barrack, he winds up, one is glad to think for his own credit, though in rather halting sentences, with the judgment that though the panegyrists of the blessings of universal military service have undoubtedly something to say for themselves, yet on the whole more is to be said against them. The military system, he thinks, may do much to employ and reclaim 'the dangerous classes'—spectres ever present to his alarmed mind—but still it has the unlucky incidental drawback of bringing burdens that are steadily fomenting discontent. That is to say, this handy device for employing and reclaiming the dangerous classes, unfortunately at the same moment and by the same process, breeds new dangerous classes, extends the area of their operations, and profoundly intensifies that irritation and discontent which makes the danger. 'Certainly,' says Mr. Lecky, 'the great military nations of the world are not those in which Anarchy, Socialism, and Nihilism are least rife.' Quite true; and the extraordinarily rapid growth of revolutionary Socialism in continental Europe, of which the author gives so full an account (ii. ch. 8), and which is one of the two or three most important phenomena of our time, is the direct and unmistakable result of militarism, and the vehement protest against it.

Nothing in political meditation can be more deeply interesting, than the connection between universal military service and universal suffrage. Taine says that each of them is twin brother of the other. Every citizen, said the early Jacobins, ought to be a soldier, every soldier a citizen. We can understand why the Jacobin, with the Duke of Brunswick and the coalition of kings on the frontier, said this. But what is the secret of the operation that places a ballot paper in one hand of every citizen, and at the same instant a rifle in the other? 'With what promises of massacre and bankruptcy for the twentieth century, with what exasperation of hatred and distrust between nations, with what destruction and waste of human toil and the fruits of it . . . with what a recoil towards the lower and unwholesome forms of the old militant societies, with how retrograde a step towards the egotistic and brutal instincts, towards the sentiments, the manners, the morality of the ancient city and of barbarous tribes.'*

No other effect of democracy is comparable with this, no other so surprising, no other so widely at variance with confident and reasoned anticipations. We can only be sure that a retrograde military and diplomatic phase must be due to deeper influences than those belonging to democracy as a mere form of government, and must have its

* *Origines de la France Contemporaine: Régime Moderne*, i. 288.

roots in the hidden and complex working of those religious and scientific ideas which at all times have exercised a preponderating influence upon human institutions and their working.

Such questions are left almost unexplored by Mr. Lecky. Nor can he be said to have advanced any other portion of his subject beyond the position in which he found it. That democracy has drawbacks, that it has difficulties of its own and weaknesses and dangers of its own, both in this country and elsewhere, every observant man is well aware. They assuredly deserve to be considered in a different spirit from that which marks these volumes.



A HISTORICAL ROMANCE



A HISTORICAL ROMANCE *

I

THE last occasion when I made bold to write about a literary achievement of Mr. Harrison's, was on the appearance of that remarkable volume, the *New Calendar of Great Men*, a dozen years ago. I ventured at some length to question the omission from the list of those heirs of the Roman Empire in the East who, on any sound estimate, must be held to have performed in more ways than one services of the first magnitude in saving civilisation in the West. The omission was Comte's fault — so far as fault it was — and not that of his distinguished adherent. Hannibal has a place in this famous calendar; so have Haroun-al-Raschid, the caliph of Bagdad, and Abd-al-Rahman, the caliph of Cordova. Charles Martel had a place for the glory of stemming the torrent of Mussulman invasion at Tours. Yet the battle of Tours (732) was only a victory over a plundering expedition of Spanish Arabs, whereas the repulse of the Saracens before Constantinople by Leo the Third (718) was what

* *Theophano: the Crusade of the Tenth Century.* A Romantic Monograph. By Frederic Harrison. London: Chapman and Hall.

first drove back the tide. Still Leo and the other great champions at Byzantium were held unworthy of canonisation. Of course the heroes of New Rome were schismatic in the eyes of the Popes of Old Rome, and it is not irreverent to the great name of Comte to suppose it natural for him to take up the Pope's grievances against the Greek schism, along with some other pontifical attributes. In truth, Comte had broad reasons of his own. The dominant fact in the mediaeval West was in his eyes the separation of spiritual from temporal power. In the Eastern Rome the two powers were essentially one; military concentration was a necessity of existence; and the Church was, as it is in Russia to-day, and as Napoleon intended it to be in France a century ago, the instrument of the State. The other vital element, again, in Comte's view of the normal evolution of the Middle Ages, was feudalism, and feudalism was inconsistent with the military requirements of Byzantine power. In consideration, therefore, of these two ruling factors, the series of events dealt with in *Theophano* was regarded by Comte as moving outside of the main stream of the progress of mankind.

Whatever defect there may have been in his master's appreciation of Byzantine influence on our world, Mr. Harrison has, at any rate, in his new volume as well as in other pieces, made it strenuously good. His Rede lecture at Cambridge four years since is a singularly comprehensive, just, and

eloquent statement and vindication of the modern case. The chapters upon Constantinople in his volume on the meaning of history abound in brilliant description and in reflections at once deep and precise. The scholar, the politician, and the general reader who happens to be little of either politician or scholar, will find both pleasure and food for thought in those sixty admirable pages.* His present story Mr. Harrison describes as an attempt, under the form of romance, to give the history of one of the most striking episodes in the annals of what used to be called the Dark Ages. His aim is to paint a general picture of the South and East of Europe, and of the relations of that portion of Christendom to the advancing power of Islam, in the tenth century. His first design was a prose narrative, with no larger use of imagination than is as truly indispensable in history, as it is declared to be in the fields of natural science.

Some of his readers may possibly wish that to this design he had adhered, for the mixture of history with romance, of real actors and known events with avowed fiction, has not always been a successful experiment. No novelist has ever had so much of the genius of history as Scott, that famous writer and true-hearted man; and if it be unluckily true that Scott is no longer widely read,

* *The Meaning of History, and other Historical Pieces* (Macmillan, 1891); *Byzantine History in the Early Middle Ages* (Macmillan, 1900).

we may be quite sure that it is so much the worse for the common knowledge of history. Apart from the stimulating contribution to historic knowledge in *Ivanhoe*, it may be suspected in the palace of truth that a majority of people who would fairly pass for cultivated, owe all they know of such figures as Louis the Eleventh and Charles the Bold to *Quentin Durward*. Scott tried his hand at a Byzantine story, but he made nothing of it: he knew little of the ground, for not even Gibbon had perceived the full bearing of the stupendous events of which Constantinople was the centre between the time of Justinian and the time of Richard Cœur de Lion. When Scott wrote *Count Robert of Paris* (1830), the noble brain that had peopled the gallery of the world's imagination with so many incomparable figures, such vivid scenes, such moving interests, was at last outworn, and the gallant man could only liken himself in a mournful image to a leaking vessel out at sea in the pitch-dark.

If anybody chooses to say that *Theophano* is old-fashioned, assuredly a fashion set by *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward* has something to say for itself. In *Hypatia* the genius of Kingsley, who had less of the historic sense than any other professor that ever sat in a chair of history, brought out some aspects of the fifth century with enchanting success. None, again, of Bulwer's romances stood higher in popularity than *Rienzi*, and to this day some foreign writers do justice to his admirable mixture of

intrigue proper for a story with historic narrative, his animated description — among other things of the plague of Florence — though less scrupulous in respect for his authorities than might have been expected from his severe treatment of the errors of some other writers.* Catherine the Second of Russia might appear a theme of grand promise, and the experiment has been in a certain fashion tried, but with indifferent result.† Lucrezia Borgia, as we all know, has been set to music, but the libretto is sadly unhistoric, for Lucrezia, it now seems, if not absolutely blameless, was still an excellent woman, and died in an entirely respectable confinement. Chateaubriand's once famous *Martyrs* (1802-9) was a romance of the persecutions of Diocletian and Galerius. Though without verse, it is poetry and not history. Its prose has the melody of plaintive song, and a fluent harmony that prose has never surpassed. The emotions with which it so deeply stirred a generation early in our last century, arose, as Aristotle said they should, not merely from scenery and spectacle, but from the inner structure of the piece. They arose, too, from the burning association, in the minds of the readers of the time, of the sufferings of the Church at the hands of Galerius, with the fresh persecution of the children of the same Church at the hands of Chaumette and the firebrands of revolution. All

* See Rodocanachi's *Cola di Rienzo*, p. xi, 1888.

† *Le Roman d'une Impératrice*, K. Waliszewski, 1893.

this gives a pathos and poetic tenderness to the tale of Eudore and Cymodocée that is hardly to be conceived in dealing with Theophano and Nicéphorus. Here warm thoughts and free spirits must give way to

The Iron-pointed pen
That notes the Tragic Doomes of men.

In this dire conflict of faith and race and rival empires, we need a firmer and sterner chord. Mr. Harrison has naturally felt an artistic compulsion to introduce the relief of gentler episodes. Some may find these episodes less suited to his silver trumpet of a style, than pageant, landscape, battle, fervid councils, stirring scenes of high historie fate.

In the works that I have named, history is secondary to romance. In *Theophano* this is reversed. It is primarily and really history, an attempt to relate authentic facts in deep colour, not verifiable in every detail out of written documents, yet wholly true to the historic tones. No piece of dilettantism, it is the production of one, now long well known as an accomplished scholar, a traveller, a powerful writer, who has kept himself well abreast of the acquisitions of new learning and new culture, and who, in this case, has both thoroughly worked the contemporary records at first hand, and laboriously mastered the mass of elucidation and dissertation due to an army of specialists.

Of course most people would admit the noblest piece of tragedy in all written history to be the retreat of the beaten Athenians from Syracuse. 'Is it or is it not,' wrote Gray to Wharton, 'the finest thing you ever read in your life?' Macaulay said: 'I do assure you that there is no prose composition in the world that I place so high as the seventh book of Thucydides. . . . Tacitus was a great man, but he was not up to the Sicilian expedition.* But it would be absurd to compare the original history of Thucydides, Herodotus, Cæsar, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, with the composite narrative of even the greatest of literary historians. Gibbon's description of the capture of Constantinople is indeed magnificent, but the gorgeous art of that splendid panorama is fatal to the most searching kind of dramatic effect upon our inmost minds; it conveys none of the tragic impression that stirs us not less deeply than even the grandest of stage-plays, and makes the reader, now more than two thousand years since those events, hold his breath in that profoundest pity which is pity without tears, as he watches the agony of the sea-fight in the great harbour, the panic and misery of the march, the horrors by the river, the death of Nicæas — of all Hellenes least deserving of an end so wretched — the dreadful sufferings of the prisoners in the stone-quarries, fleet and army perishing from the face of the earth, and of the many who had

* Trevelyan, i. 440, 449.

gone forth few ever returning home. Here is indeed the supreme model of tragic prose.

It was inevitable that a story of Byzantium in the tenth century should take a shape not so much of tragedy as of melodrama, and the author has thrown himself into the melodramatic elements of his tale with extraordinary force and spirit. He has not always resisted the temptation to overdo these elements, and to push animation to violence. Still, the temper of the age was in essence barbaric, and any narrative without a sort of violence would be untrue to local and historic colour, just as it would be in a romance of Petersburg or Belgrade at certain moments of the nineteenth century. Every competent judge will admire the energy with which the high and strenuous pitch is from beginning to end swiftly and unfalteringly sustained. Mr. Harrison is a recognised master of language; not always wholly free from excess, but direct, powerful, plain, with none of our latter-day nonsense of mining and posturing, of elliptic brevities, eryptic phrase, vapid trick, and the hundred affectations and devices of ambitious insincerity. He has the signal merit of looking his readers in the eye; his periods, even when we most dissent from their substance, are alive with the strong and manly pulse of the writer's own personality. Whether Theophano and Nicophorus and Otto and Gerbert and Luitprand and the rest will be found 'convincing' or not, heaven knows; I

have never been able to attach any definite significance whatever to that favourite word in our new critical vocabulary. Let this be as it may, the result of the author's industry, skill, and many talents is a book abundant at once in dramatic interest, in sound knowledge, and in historical instruction: a fine panorama of the long secular strife between East and West, between Islam and the two rival and mutually infuriated forms of Christian faith.

II

I should like to be allowed a single moment of digression on an issue that requires hours or days. With graceful propriety, the book is dedicated to the Professor of History at Cambridge, whose studies of the Byzantine period 'so greatly inspired and enlarged' our monograph. We may be sure that Professor Bury will both appreciate the compliment thus paid to him, and will enjoy the illumination diffused by these flashing pages over the sombre landscape that he has himself so diligently explored. I even permit myself for an instant to wonder whether it may not melt the learned and accomplished professor to soften a little of the severity with which, in his memorable introductory lecture at Cambridge last year, he spoke of the time-honoured association of literature with history acting 'as a sort of vague cloud, half concealing

from men's eyes the new position in the heavens.' So long as history, he told his hearers, was regarded as an art, the sanctions of truth and accuracy would not be severe. Why? He reminded them that 'history is not a branch of literature.' He adjured them to observe that Ranke's famous saying that 'he would only say how a thing actually was,' ought to be even more widely accepted as 'a warning against transgressing the province of facts.' Perhaps some of Professor Bury's more youthful listeners, with the presumption of their years, may have asked themselves whether the historian is to present all the facts of his period or his subject; if not, whether he will not be forced to select; if he must select, then how can he do it, how can he group, how can he fix the relations of facts to one another, how weigh their comparative importance, without some sort of guiding principle, conception, or pre-conception? In short, he will find himself outside of 'the province of facts' before he knows where he is, and this is what actually happens to some of the most eminent members of the school. The lecturer himself in truth speedily abated the rigour of his limitation, and added to the collection, discovery, and classification of facts the further duty of interpreting them. But when does not the historian's interpretation govern from first to last his collection and his classification? Take what case you will. Father Paul tells the facts of the Concil of Trent one way, Pallavicino tells them in

another way. The annals of the Papacy — in some respects the most fascinating and important of all the chapters of modern history — are one thing in the hands of Pastor the Catholic, another thing to Creighton the Anglican, a third thing to Möller the Lutheran, and something again quite different to writers of more secular stamp like Gregorovius and Reumont. It is not merely difference in documents that makes the history of the French Revolution one story to Thiers or Mignet, and a story wholly different to Louis Blanc or to Taine. Talk of history being a science as loudly as ever we like, the writer of it will continue to approach his chests of archives with the bunch of keys in his hand. When examined, all these adjurations really mean little more — and this is a great deal — than that sources, documents, authorities are sometimes good and sometimes bad, sometimes first-rate and sometimes second-rate ; that the student should know the difference ; that he should be systematic and minute and definite and precise ; that he should not regard a statement as certain unless he has scrutinised the evidence. All admirable and indispensable and scientific rules, but hardly constituting a brand-new science ; or banishing ‘the time-honoured association of history with literature,’ from which the reflective or ethical writer is warned off ; or reducing Clio, the muse, to the level of the kitchen drudge who supplies her meals, and cashiering the architect in favour of the honest bricklayer and the stonemason. A science means a good deal

more than this, and even something different from this. Dumas wittily said that Lamartine's famous book on the Girondins raised history to the dignity of romance. Lamartine doubtless exalted the arts of literature rather high, as did the illustrious Dumas himself; but after all it does a book no harm to be readable; and I believe Byzantine students, including Professor Bury — the most eminent and thorough of them all, and (if I may say so without offence) the most readable and enjoyable — will be grateful to Mr. Garrison for attracting interest to a field whither Heyd, Kopf, Hirsch, Schlumberger, Salzenberg, Paspates, Van Millingen, and Dr. Krambacher, have hitherto failed to allure more than the esoteric and the elect.

III

What we may call the reclamation of the low-lying lands of the Byzantine period, is in some respects the most remarkable literary (or scientific) event of our day. Voltaire called Byzantine history 'a repertory of declamation and miracles, disgraceful to the human mind.' Our limpid rationalist, Mr. Lecky, talks of it as the most thoroughly base and despicable form that civilisation has yet assumed. Then Hegel says, 'the history of the highly civilised Eastern Empire — where, as we might suppose, the Spirit of Christianity could be taken up in its truth and purity — exhibits to us a

millennial series of uninterrupted crimes, weaknesses, basenesses, and want of principle; a most repulsive, and consequently a most uninteresting picture.' De Maistre, the ultra-Catholic, was as bitter as Voltaire, the ultra non-Catholic. 'Byzantium,' he cries with characteristic energy, 'would make us believe in the system of climates, or in exhalations peculiar to certain spots. . . . Ransack universal history, nowhere can you find a dynasty more wretched. Either feeble or furious, or both at the same time, these insupportable princes especially turned their demented interests on the side of theology, of which their despotism took possession to overthrow it. One would say that the French language meant to do justice on their empire by styling it as *Bas Empire*. It perished as it had lived, in the thick of a disputation. Mahomet the Second burst open the gates of the capital while sophists were wrangling about the glory of Monnt Tabor.'* On a lower level than Voltaire, Hegel, and De Maistre,—during the frenzy of the Crimean War,—a writer in a patriotic periodical exulted over the time 'when the last of the Byzantine historians was blown into the air by our brave allies the Turks.'

It was Finlay with whom, among serious students, the reaction began. In 1843—one of the three or four continuous decades in which the new era of intellectual life of the nineteenth century in England

* *Du Pape*, Bk. iv. ch. 9.

was most active — Finlay published the first of the works that came to an end eighteen years later, presenting twenty centuries of the life of the Greek nation ‘in Roman subjection, Byzantine servitude, and Turkish slavery.’ He brought a great mass of new knowledge, and he lighted up new knowledge with fresh reflections and considerations that constituted one of the most striking chapters in the history of European civilisation on history’s amplest scale. Finlay’s case is interesting and significant. He did not hunt for a literary subject. He was the purchaser of a landed estate in Attica, endeavoured to improve it, lost his money and his labour, and then in a philosophic spirit turned to study the conditions of the country and its people, tracing back link by link the long chain of political, social, ecclesiastical, racial, and above all economic events, that explained the Attic peasant of to-day and of all the ages intervening since the peasant of Alexander the Great. Of this vast operation, what the world will pretty surely persist in calling the Byzantine Empire soon became the dominating centre; he could not tell the Greek story without the Byzantine story, and it is Finlay who first unfolded what the Byzantine Empire was, and first vindicated its share in the growth of Western civilisation and the forms of the modern world.

These volumes kindled the ardent admiration of Freeman (1855). He called them the greatest work that British historical literature had produced since

the days of Gibbon, and even the most thoroughly original history in our language. No work, he said, from either an ordinary scholar or an ordinary politician, could ever come near to the native strength and originality of the work of the solitary thinker, studying, musing on, and recording the events of two thousand years, in order to solve the problems that he saw at his own door. Nobody has ever grasped more effectively than Freeman the truth that is the mainspring of Mr. Harrison's monograph: 'If there had been Turks at Constantinople in the ninth and tenth centuries, the names Europe and Christendom could never have had so nearly the same meaning as they have had for ages.' This truth, first derived from Finlay, corroborated and fitted in with the two cardinal principles that Freeman never wearied of preaching to the studious minority of mankind: the unity of history, and the fatal error of drawing lines between ancient and modern. The doctrine about the Byzantine Empire, which he propagated with characteristic tenacity and an iteration that to the carnal man was almost tiresome, became the inspiration of a new school in this country, and in that school there has been no such diligent and fruitful worker as Professor Bury.

Even those who discern most clearly the title of the more important of the many various stages of Byzantine power to a marked place in history, discern also some of the reasons why the tale of them has been found, until our last half-century, so un-

attractive or even repellent, so darkly tarnished, so remote from the ordinary track of literary or historic curiosity. Mr. Harrison's own vivid and energetic presentation itself helps to explain. It is hard either to produce or feel the charm, emotion, sentiment, of romance, where scene and personage are on a plane of civilisation so alien to our own. Flaubert's story of *Salammbô* was thought by French critics to find comparatively few friends, for this among other good reasons, that readers in Paris or in London could have no sympathy, and could be conscious of no affinity, with a world where the cruel abominations imputed to Carthage made the normal life of the community.* Christian Constantinople in the tenth century was certainly not so far off in ways of life and modes of thought as Carthage is supposed to have been. Yet, if not wholly Eastern, it certainly was not Western. A fierce controversy raged in the ninth century between Slav and German clergy, whether God could be adored in any language save Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, these being the three sacred tongues of the inscription placed upon the Cross.† Whatever we may think of the right or wrong of the trilingual heresy, it is certain that alike by the long stream of Western institutions, and by all our unbroken systems of literary education, it is with Hebrew things

* Francis W. Newman, with his turn for siding with minorities (see vol. i. of his *Miscellanies*, pp. 278-304), once delivered what was thought an effective lecture entitled *Punicæ Vindicæ*.

† *Cyrille et Méthode*, par Louis Léger, 1868, p. 96.

and notions, and Greek and Roman things and notions, in the antique world that we are most at home. If into the antique world we must be taken at the close quarters that a romance requires, the Byzantine State presented old practice and idea in such unfamiliar association as to hide any sense of affinity and to shut out either sympathy or charm. The author of *Theophano* faces this, and valiantly makes head against it. The signal peculiarities that account for the alienation of common curiosity or feeling from Byzantine history, which Mr. Harrison has so boldly confronted, are pretty obvious. They have been often enumerated before now. The Eastern Empire was a conservative State, not a progressive State. It is the story of administration and law, not of letters, philosophy, or liberty; in spite of Hellenic vanities, it is the story of a government, not of a nation. The leading exercises of mind lay in fields from which all intellectual interest has long ebbed away. It was a Christian Father who said of Constantinople in the fourth century: 'This city is full of handicraftsmen and slaves, who are all profound theologians, and preach in their workshops and in the streets. If you want a man to change a piece of silver, he instructs you in what consists the distinction between the Father and the Son; if you ask the price of a loaf of bread, you get for answer that the Son is inferior to the Father: and if you ask whether the bread is ready, the rejoinder is that the genesis of the Son is from

Nothing.' Just as the religious fanaticism inspired by the Koran put out in the twelfth century the light of intellectual development among the Spanish Arabs, so the odious and contemptible disputes of superstition at Constantinople arrested all progressive movements of either Greek or Roman genius. What Professor Bury himself says* of the seventh century at Byzantium was not less true of many other centuries: 'Men who professed to be educated believed in the most ridiculous miracles; and the law of natural cause and effect, which, however inadequately recognised, has generally maintained some sort of ascendancy in human reason, became at this period practically obsolete.' By such periods men will never be attracted. These futile and sanguinary wrangles, in spite of the social and political problems involved in some of them, make us wonder whether Comte, Voltaire, Hegel, and De Maistre were not in the right after all.

In one of the most brilliant of his pieces † Mr. Harrison has described what he truly calls the painful majesty of the first sight of Athens; has reminded us that Attica is hardly bigger than the Isle of Wight, and that the city of the violet crown itself would easily stand in the area of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens; yet what undying dramas were played upon that narrow stage! One main reason why these dramas can never die is that, as Pericles and Nicias boasted in Athenian polity,

* *Later Roman Empire*, ii. 387. † *Meanings of History*, ch. x.

every man was free to lead his daily life, and free to think his own thoughts. In Byzantium the stream never purified itself or flowed clear. No fresh tributary of living water flowed into it from the main currents of intellectual life in Europe. The service, on the other hand, of Byzantium to Europe — without approaching the vexed questions of architecture and secondary decorative arts — was in the first place military and defensive ; secondly, it was preservative of the fruits of an intellectual life supremely different from its own. Nobody has described this second service more justly than Mr. Harrison in a passage of his *Rede lecture* : —

The peculiar, indispensable service of Byzantine literature was the preservation of the language, philology, and archaeology of Greece. It is impossible to see how our knowledge of ancient literature or civilisation could have been recovered if Constantinople had not nursed through the early Middle Ages the vast accumulations of Greek learning in the schools of Alexandria, Athens, and Asia Minor: . . . if indefatigable copyists had not toiled in multiplying the texts of ancient Greece. Pedantic, dull, blundering as they are too often, they are indispensable. We pick precious truths and knowledge out of their garrulities and stupidities, for they preserve what otherwise would have been lost for ever. . . . Dunces and pedants as they were, they servilely repeated the words of the immortals. Had they not done so the immortals would have died long ago.*

* See also Dr. Sandys' extremely interesting *History of Classical Scholarship*, 1903, p. 427.

Besides this great service in the capacity, as it has been called, of 'librarian to the human race,' a more important claim is made, that Byzantium was for the Slav world what Rome was for the Germanic world. It was Byzantium that out of Bulgarian, Magyar, Croat hordes made Servia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary. It transmitted or imposed the Christian religion from Hungary to Armenia and Abyssinia. It initiated a literary language among Slavs and Goths. It established the first centres of literary civilisation. It gave them ideas and methods of government.* In comparison with the more highly organised States of the Western world, the result may seem only a moderate improvement upon anarchy, but in comparison with what went before, even the South-Eastern lands of Europe are cosmos.

If it be true that an epic ought to have a beginning and an end, we may say on the other hand, without paradox, that history is most interesting when it is part of a tale that is continuous and has no end. The close of the Eastern Empire, on a superficial glance, has the look of a dark, squalid, and sanguinary *cul-de-sac*. When the Latins and the Turks together brought it to its doom, Europe was indeed conscious of a tremendous shock; but it was not the shock of tragedy, for the Westerns felt little pity or sympathy for the immediate victims, though Europe was not without fear for

* Rambaud's *Empire Grec au XIème Siècle*, p. 10.

herself, and not without some belated indignation or remorse at a catastrophe due to the bigotry, cupidity, and selfishness masked under Western Christianity. It was Rome that gave Constantinople to Mahound. Yet the overthrow of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turk in the middle of the fifteenth century was not really the end of the Byzantine system. In the tenth century the faith of the Cross passed into Russia. It came from Byzantium, not from Rome, bringing Russia over the frontier of Christendom in one sense, yet, by reason of the great Christian schism, at the same time cutting Russia off from Christendom in another. The earliest type of civilisation in Russia is Byzantine, an autocratic State, without political rights, ruled by imperial omnipotence with the aid of a hierarchy of functionaries.* The huge waves of Mongol invasion did not sweep away the deep impress of Byzantine influence. From Vladimir to Peter the Great, Russia has never entirely escaped the Byzantine ascendancy exercised over it by the clergy, the schools, the laws, the literature. The Mongols gave an Asiatic colour to Czarism which grew up in their shadow, yet it was from Byzantium and from the Greeks of the Lower Empire that the Russian princes borrowed the type and the model, along with the forms, the etiquette, and even the very name, of autoocracy, as after the fall of Constantinople Ivan the Third borrowed from the

* See Leroy-Beaulieu's *L'Empire des Tsars*, i. 214.

Palaeologi the imperial eagle and arms.* When Bishop Creighton witnessed the coronation of the Russian Czar at Moscow, he describes how the stranger from the West felt that he had passed outside the circle of European experience, European ideas and influences, and entered upon a new phase of culture to be judged by canons of its own. The Bishop's vivid story of that strange barbaric scene is the counterpart of Mr. Garrison's picture of the coronation of Romanus and Theophano in the Church of the Holy Wisdom at Constantinople in 960.† How far that peculiar prolongation of the Byzantine Empire through the Orthodox Church has been an elevating force, this is not the place to inquire; any more than it is the place to inquire into the connected question how far the corresponding ascendancy of the Catholic Church elevated government or people in the Spanish Peninsula.

IV

Having said this much on the subject of our monograph, let me rapidly sketch its outline. Theophano, the daughter of a Greek in obscure circumstances, by her singular beauty and fascinations caught the fancy of Romanus, the youthful son of Constantine (Porphyrogenitus), seventh of that name in the list of Byzantine emperors. Constantine consented to their union—a piece of

* *L'Empire des Tsars*, i. 227.

† See Creighton's *Historical Essays and Reviews*, 1902.

kindness which, according to some chroniclers, probably mendacious, the young people repaid by a murderous palace plot. Romanus mounted the imperial throne, and with him Theophano rose to the august rank of Basilissa.

Marriage, alas! seemed only to have given the young Basileus increased zest for wild sports and scandalous adventures, which were rapidly destroying his health and sapping what was left in him of moral fibre. Now he plunged into the forests of Thrace, now into those of Bithynia to hunt the boar or the bear, exhausting himself in midnight fatigues and exposure to all weathers and seasons. From time to time he was seen in the *Tzykanisterion*, or polo ground, in the east side of the Palace between the Pharos and the sea-wall. Here the young nobles, having the *entrée*, were wont to engage in polo and other exercises on horseback. This spacious practising ground had been extended and levelled by the Emperor Basil. And here his royal descendant loved to exhibit his prowess as a player in that manly game of polo which the Byzantines had adopted from the Persians. . . . It was no flattery when the best players in the kingdom yielded the victory to the splendid horsemanship and keen eye of the Imperial athlete, whilst the courtiers and ladies of the royal household surveyed the games from arcades of the terrace above. First one and then another of the beauties, who thronged those gay companies, would be chosen by the gallant prince to receive the crown or garland which was the winner's prize: and the vagrant amours of his insatiable fancy gave as much ceaseless gossip to the witty and frivolous court as ever did a Louis at Versailles or a Charles at Whitehall.

The pleasure-loving prince was no more changed by elevation to supreme power than was Louis the Fifteenth; but from one high task of empire at least he did not shrink. Crete was in the hands of the Saracens, and Saracen corsairs harassed the islands of the Archipelago, cut off the commerce of Constantinople, and even interrupted the supply of provisions to the mighty capital. Romanus fitted out a great expedition to root out so grave a mischief to his people, and to wipe off a dark disgrace from Christian fame.

A glorious July morning in the year of our Lord 960 was irradiating the shores of the Propontis and the porticoes and domes of Byzantium; and already the city and Palace of the Cæsars were crowded with brilliant throngs and gala trappings of expectant triumph. All the terraces which commanded a view of the sea were full of eager sightseers. The walls that girdled the city on the seaside were covered with dense groups; and the sea itself, from the Golden Horn to the Princes Islands, was alive with thousands of vessels of every description as far as the eye could reach. The mighty expedition to recover Crete from the Infidel was at last about to sail. In the Sacred Palace itself a throng of courtiers and high officials were gathered in the *Tzykanisterion*, or polo ground, and in the gardens, porticoes, and arcades that adjoined it, waiting for their Majesties and the great ministers of State, who were to watch the fleet at its departure and wish Godspeed to its illustrious commander. In the corridors and cloisters of the Palace all was animation and a hubbub of greetings, inquiries, and ardent anticipations. A group of gentlemen

of the wardrobe, grooms of the chamber, and a silentiary were discussing the exact constitution of the vast expedition. Nicetas, the Paphlagonian, a *vestiarus*, or gentleman of the wardrobe, was loudly exclaiming that so powerful an armament had never left the Golden Horn since the age of the great Heraclius.

In command was Nicephorus Phocas, who is, in fact, the hero of our story. The reader has been introduced to him in the glowing pages that describe the coronation:—

Nicephorus Phocas, the most eminent chief of a long line of Armenian nobles, the most heroic warrior of a family of famous men of war, was now in the flower of his strength, at forty-six years of age. His natural olive complexion had been tanned and burnt almost to a dark hue in the incessant campaigns he had fought since his boyhood amid the suns of Mesopotamia and the snowy passes of Cilicia. He wore his hair long and flowing, with a crisp beard just beginning to be tinged with grey. His nose was long and aquiline, his eyes were dark, of an intense fire, under a penthouse of thick black eyebrows. Of middle height, he had the trunk and shoulders of a giant, with abnormal depth of chest, and the long muscular arms with which he had more than once in battle cleaved a mailed enemy to the chine. His look was stern and pensive, lighted up at moments, as it were, with a sombre fire within. He was taciturn and immovable by habit, so that hardly a gesture or a look ever betrayed his purpose or his thought. To-day he stalked on alone, his mind far away from the Sacred Palace, with neither comrade nor lieutenant by his side; and he just acknowledged

with his hand the cheers and obeisances with which he was received. It was noticed that he alone of all that brilliant throng had chosen to attend the procession in his well-worn tunie and his close helm and corselet of aetion, in the same accoutrements and arms in which he was wont to appear in many a bloody field.

The conquest of Crete was both a triumphant feat of arms and a triumph of patriotic policy. A new and greater expedition (962) was mustered for a still mightier march.

Through seven different passes of the Taurus, mainly through that known as the 'Cilician Gates,' the various corps debouched down upon the Saracen province that had once been the Cilicia of Augustus and Trajan. The different armies had separate objectives, but were kept in close touch with each other, and each was preceded by an outer screen of light cavalry, which pressed on in front and scoured the whole country. As the parallel forces poured down like a deluge on the rich plains, the miserable people fled before them or crowded into the forts; the Saracen troops of all arms were seized with panic, and made no effort to stem the torrent. Fort after fort, walled towns, castles, and camps fell rapidly into the hands of the invading Christians. The overwhelming numbers that Nicephorus had collected covered the country for a hundred miles. By light siege train, hurried forward, they captured fortresses by escalade. Tarsus, Adana, Mopsuestia, and Seleucia were taken by storm. The gallant Emir of Aleppo, Seif Eddauléh, of the dynasty of Hamdan, the hero of the Saracens of Asia in the tenth century, whom the Greeks called 'the accursed Chandas,' yielded before the avalanche. He ordered his men to retreat in-

land towards Syria and to attempt nothing but separate and small encounters to harass the line of communications. The host poured on, the Arab historian declares, 'like hungry wolves,' ravaging the land, burning villages and destroying all crops and stores which they could not use. Karamountis, the Emir of Tarsus, attempted pitched battle, but was utterly defeated and left five thousand of his men dead upon the field: the rest being prisoners of war. All the calculations of the Roman general were fulfilled. Every order had been carried out to the letter. Every corps reached the point at which it was directed at the appointed time. The whole of Cilicia was swept as by a tornado. And, within twenty-two days, the Arab historian, Aboulfaradj, relates that fifty-five fortresses and forty-five towns had fallen into the hands of the Christians. Enormous booty and tens of thousands of prisoners were taken; and, after three centuries, the rich and broad land, watered by the Cydnus and Pyramus, and lying between the range of Taurus and the Mediterranean Sea, passed again into the realm of Christ and of Rome.

Nicephorus resumed his onward march in earnest. . . . As the vast range of Taurus had lain between the Empire and the Saracen in Cilicia, so now the range of the Amanus divided it from the provinces of Syria, Damascus, and Aleppo. Anazarba, Sis, and other strong forts were swept away, their defenders ruthlessly slaughtered, and their homes sacked. But nothing could arrest the invaders till they poured over the passes of Amanus down into the valley of the Orontes, and reached the great plains which stretch away from the 'Gates of Syria' to the Euphrates. Once across the defiles of the Amanus range, Nicephorus concentrated his whole force for a plunge upon Aleppo, the seat and capital of 'the accursed Chamdas.'

The plunge was irresistible; the Byzantine general forced his way into the city, and, 'with fierce exultation, he surveyed the annihilation of the terrible enemy who had made the Roman Empire reel to its foundations, and he saw that the frontiers of Rome were destined to extend again to the Euphrates.'

At Constantinople, meanwhile, feud and intrigue within the palace had prepared the way for revolution, when the youthful emperor was removed by death. Though Nicephorus was not the man to play the part assigned to Bothwell, the reader, with a feeling that most stories have really been told before with different names and changed costumes, may perhaps bethink him of Mary Stuart, and Bothwell, and Darnley, and the explosion of the Kirk o' Field. That Theophano was actively concerned in the death of her first husband is not proved, and Mr. Harrison takes the other view, though either her fierce ambition or a lawless passion for the military hero of the hour, made the removal of Romanus necessary to her designs. She brought him back to Constantinople; by her craft and resolution baffled the schemes of a powerful minister fighting to retain authority; and, finally, with the aid of the Patriarch, succeeded in making Nicephorus Autoocrat and her husband. Intrigues within the palace, factions and bloody fights,—for Armenian massacres the other day were by no means the first or the worst of such scenes in Con-

stantinople, whether Christian or Mahometan,—gorgeous pageants, conflicts between Emperor and Patriarch, the election of Theophano, the moral fall and remorse of Nicephorus, make vivid masterpieces of description, while the historic significance of it all is graphically brought out in eager debate and eloquent argument in council and in camp. One of the main historic facts is the cosmopolitan character of Constantinople in these ages; it was, let us repeat, the seat of a government, not the central home of a nationality; and, above all, the incessant strife within its walls and without its walls was cosmopolitan strife. A reception of foreign envoys in one of the vast courts of the imperial palace brings vividly home to the reader of to-day, as it was intended to bring home to the envoys themselves, the world-wide relations of the Empire and its claim to be the centre of universal power.

The envoy of the Caliph was succeeded by a prelate despatched from old Rome by the Pope (or Anti-Pope) Leo the Eighth, who was struggling amidst horrors of every sort to dispossess the infamous Octavian claiming to be Pope John the Twelfth. Nicephorus, whose detestation of the degraded and servile Papacy was boundless, had been persuaded with difficulty to receive the opponent and rival of the ferocious murderer who now desecrated the Latin see. Nicephorus listened to the hollow congratulations of the Italian prelate in silence, and directed his Chancellor to reply to them with the

best grace he could assume. The Roman prelate was followed by envoys from Venice, Amalfi, and the Dukes of Beneventum and Capua, who still admitted a shadowy bond of vassalage to the successor of Justinian at Byzantium. The Italian envoys were succeeded by a crowd of deputies from various nations, tribes, and princelets north of the Ister and the Euxine sea, or such as lay beyond the eastern frontier of the empire. They were first Patzinaks, then Russ; then Chazars, Alans, and 'Turks,' or Hungarians, as we call them to-day. All were in uncouth and picturesque native costumes, shaggy skins, tall and pointed headgear, and strange ornaments. They brought rich presents of various sorts, embroidered garments, embossed arms, enamelled vases, horses, performing bears, and white boarhounds, which were paraded in the court outside—then announced with much solemnity, and received with equal curiosity and interest.

The long reception was continued for hours as the envoys were presented from the kings of Armenia proper, the dwellers around Mount Ararat and the plains of Lake Van; from the Abasgians and Georgians of the Caucasus, the Lazi, and the Chief of the Iberians, who had been honoured with the right to assume the Byzantine title of Curopalates. Long before the stream of introductions had ended, with its ever-varying changes of language, costume, and manner, the young Scandinavian had been quite lost in the babel of tongues and the moving panorama before his eyes.

Like the actual scene, and like Gibbon's history of it, *Theophano* makes a crowded canvas. It could not be otherwise; but one effect is partially to deprive Nicephorus of the position of isolated relief,

that the full interest of his moral catastrophe seems to require. The throng of incident and figure in some degree disperses our attention, and prevents its concentration on the hero, who was not only hero but saint. Still, the author is writing history, not a modern psychological romance. In its elements the case is old enough—the crash of a stern and lofty nature before the wiles of Eve and the solicitations of appetite. Nicephorus in one stage is full of the monastic enthusiasm of the early centuries of Christian faith, despising the Christianity of the common world, regardless of the State, eager for flight from all carnal and secular things into a life of solitary communion with the unseen God. Even when he has been forced, against the loud whispers of conscience and the leanings of his inner will, into campaigns for the deliverance of the State from the inroads of Mahometan blasphemers, after he has assumed the crown of autoocrat, he is still haunted by the old visions of asceticism. Under the purple robe he still wears the hair shirt of the penitent and the recluse, and at banquets of savoury meats and exquisite wines he prefers water and lentils. The struggle within the breast of Nicephorus was but a type of one of the greatest of the conflicts that perplexed and tore that Eastern world, and not the Eastern world alone.

The rule of Nicephorus marked a few years of failure and disappointment, mixed with transient

military success. From armed anchorite, in spite of his sedulous performance of the ceremonial offices of his Church, he relapsed into the ordinary habits of the Byzantine autocrat. The cost of the levies of men, drawn from the Italian coasts across Greece and Asia as far as the source of the Euphrates, strained the finances to the uttermost. Heavy taxes and debased coinage broke down his popularity, and his fulminations against weakening the military resources of the empire by the multiplication of monasteries brought him into disfavour with the Patriarch and the ecclesiastics. What Mr. Harrison truly calls the eternal quarrel about 'investitures,' that well-known chapter in the Western history of Popes and Kings, led to fierce remonstrances from the Patriarch. He joined the opposition organised within the palace by Theophano. Whether from discontent at a temperament less ardent than her own, or from politic desire to separate her lot from that of a falling potentate, or from a new-born passion for Tzimiskes, a soldier as heroic as Nicephorus himself, the empress was plotting treason with formidable confederates. The long and exciting episode is told with admirable vigour, and the end arrived in the chapter headed 'Clytemnestra.' The author spares us none of the horrors of the murder of Nicephorus—in some details very like a similar transaction in the same quarter of Europe not long ago. Theophano took little by crimes that have given her a place, though

a secondary one, among the names of evil women in high places, Theodora, Irene, and the others. The Patriarch refused to recognise Tzimiskes, her accomplice in the murder of his uncle, unless he put her away. So, with her beauty, her ambition, her passion for intrigue, she was banished to a solitary island, where our present author is content to leave her. When her sons came to the throne, they are said to have recalled her to the imperial palace. For history the curtain of her drama and its stage had fallen.

V

Such is the central outline of our romance, and into it the author has wrought a rich store of episodic material, well incorporated into the main tissue and design, extremely picturesque and striking, as well as true to such records as survive. We have from time to time the relief of being transported westward of Byzantium to the more familiar ground of Spain and Old Rome. The glory of Rome had departed indeed, for the tenth century was the nadir, and Mr. Harrison does not paint the scene in darker colours than really belonged to it:—

‘I will not attempt to prophesy against your reverence,’ said Guido; ‘I can only speak of what is, and what has been in all living memory. This famous city is now a den of bandits, the haunt of infamous women, and a scene of bloodshed and torment. These barons live in their

castles amidst gangs of hired russians, till they ride forth to fight each other or to plunder their neighbours. I have seen these grey walls hung with the carcasses of their victims, and these streets, churches, and streams run with blood, whenever the horsemen of some pretender to the throne, or of the German princes, come down to sack the city, or to quell an insurrection of the citizens. I have seen Popes made and unmade at the order of a profligate woman or of a murderous despot. I have seen one crowned Pope trample on another crowned Pope, break his crozier, and tear off his robes, in presence of an Emperor and of all his Court. I have seen the Prefect of Rome hung by his hair from the statue of Constantine, and dragged through the streets naked on an ass. I saw twelve “Captains of the Regions” hung on gallows, whilst other leaders were blinded, some decapitated. Some were torn from their graves and their bodies cast to the dogs. This is the modern rendering of the *pax Romana*, and all is done under orders of him whom we are waiting here to see, him whom they call their “pacific Emperor, *semper Augustus*,” and with the blessing of the creatures whom he pleases to nominate as the successors of St. Peter.’

In one fascinating chapter we see the Caliph of the West at Cordova, the great Caliph, the Charlemagne of Saracen Spain, now at the close of his long rule of half a century—‘the greatest ruler of his age and the noblest of the Saracen race. In fifty years he had reduced the rebels and traitors within his own dominion, had made vassals of the Christian princelets of North Spain, and had driven

back the Mauritanian invaders from Africa. He possessed a magnificent fleet, a powerful army, and a treasury of 20,000,000 gold pieces. The police of his realm secured perfect order and peace; the state of agriculture was in the highest degree thriving; commerce and manufactures were equally advanced.' His days come to their close in this chapter, and we read the moving words attached by him to his last testament: 'Fifty years have I been on this throne. Riches, honours, pleasures have been poured on me, and I have drained them all to the dregs. The sovereigns who are my rivals respect me, or fear me—both envy me; for all that men desire has been showered on me by Allah, the Bountiful, the All-merciful. But in all these years of apparent felicity I can only count fourteen days wherein I have been truly happy. My son, meditate on this, and judge at their true value human grandeur, this world, and man's life.'

It was his son, Hakem the Second, who, as Renan has described, had the glory of opening that brilliant series of studies which, by the influence that they exercised upon Christian Europe, hold so important a place in the history of civilisation. Two centuries later the brilliant Arab-Spanish era closed. Meanwhile, says Renan, the taste for knowledge and for beautiful things had established in that privileged corner of the world a tolerance of which modern times can hardly offer us an example. 'Christians, Jews, Moslems spoke the same tongue,

sang the same poetry, shared the same literary and scientific studies. All the barriers that separate men had fallen, all worked with one accord at the task of common civilisation.* Mr. Harrison has ascribed a mood like this to his Fatima in her home among the mountains of the Sierra Morena, north of Cordova:—

‘There is but one God,’ she said, with profound earnestness: ‘I know but one God, and I care not if He be named the Trinity or Allah. I have lived so long in this Andalusian Caliphate; I have seen enough of the Romans of the Empire.’ She sighed as she uttered that name. ‘I have seen and heard enough to know that Christendom and Islam have each much that is God-like and good, and much that is of Sheitan and evil. This splendid capital of Cordova is in many things, in most things, the counterpart of Byzantium — as rich, as luxurious, as corrupt, as elegant, as turbulent. These Ommeyades here execrate the Fatimites: Abbasides from the first contend with Kharijis. There are as many sects amongst Mussulmans as there are amongst Christians — as many dynasties, as many wars. Bagdad, Damaseus, Haleb, Antioch, Edessa, Fostat, Kairouan, Andalusia, war on each other as often as Byzantine, Bulgarian, Lombard, Calabrian, Frank, or Saxon. Whether it be Allah and His Prophet, or Christ and His Mother, who inspire these rivalries and combats, I know not. All that I know is that it is not the one God.’

It was eight centuries after this that a like thought inspired the beautiful apologue of the Three

* *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, p. 4.

Rings, as adopted and extended by Lessing from Boccaccio, and coming to him through the Hundred Old Novels, from some tongue in some corner of the Mediterranean that, as scholars tell us, can never now be known.* Everybody knows it, in or out of Lessing's noble dramatic setting, how Saladin, the great Saracen, wishing to lay a trap for Nathan, the wise and rich Jew, asked him, 'Honest man, I would gladly know from thee which religion thou judgest to be the true one, Jewish, Mahometan, or Christian.' Then Nathan, in answer, tells him of a certain family owning a ring of much beauty and worth, and endowed with the magical virtue of making every wearer of it beloved by God and men. The possessor of it became thereby head of the family and owner of the estate. This the father in successive generations always gave to whomsoever of his descendants he deemed the worthiest. At length a father had three sons, all of whom he loved alike. In his perplexity to whom to give the ring, he sent for a craftsman, and had two more rings made of such exact resemblance that even he himself could hardly tell the true one. Being now very old, he privately gave a ring to each of his three sons. When he was dead, each of them produced his ring, and claimed the honour and the estate. They

* See Burekhardt's *Renaissance in Italy*, Eng. trans., ii. 302 note. Anywhere else but Florence this 'impious thought of parallel between the three religions, would have lighted the fires of the stake.' — Renan, *Averroës*, p. 389.

brought the case before the judge. ‘I hear,’ said the judge, ‘that the true ring has the power of making its wearer pleasing in the sight of God and of man. Let each of you believe that his ring is the true one. Let each of you strive to make known the virtue of his ring, by gentleness, by hearty peacefulness, by well-doing, by the utmost inward devotion to God. And then, if this power of the gems reveals itself with your children’s children, I invite you again, thousands and thousands of years hence, before this tribunal. Then one wiser than I will sit in the judgment-seat and will decide.*

VI

The speculative bearings of the phantasmagoria that he unfolds before his readers, scarcely fall within the scope of Mr. Harrison’s monograph. His business here is spectacle, and not philosophising. The genius of Montesquieu early divined that the poisoned source of all the misfortunes of the Byzantines was that they never knew the nature, or the respective boundaries, of ecclesiastical and secular power. ‘This great distinction, that is the foundation on which reposes the tranquillity of nations, springs not only from religion, but also from nature and reason, that insists on things essentially separate never being confounded.’† Here,

* *Nathan der Weise*, III. vi., whither the wise reader will be-take himself for one of the grand passages in literature.

† *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, ch. xxii.

indeed, as in so many other relations, Montesquieu clearly came near the possession of the master-key. Of all the manifold aspects of human history, the central and most commanding of them is the spirit of man, as we see and consider it, working in creeds and institutions, working against them, piercing them, transforming them, ever striving to coerce the concrete into more and more harmony with the abstract. The military system that was rendered necessary in the Eastern Empire by the pressure of enemies outside, reduced abstract Christianity, in its doctrines and its organisation, into a fatal, though often mutinous, subjection to temporal institutions. The records of the Churches, alike in East and West, have many a dismal and depressing page, but none more depressing than the forms with which abstract Christianity clothed itself in the Eastern Empire, or the feuds of policy and nationality that blazoned the mysteries of faith in letters of blood upon rival banners.

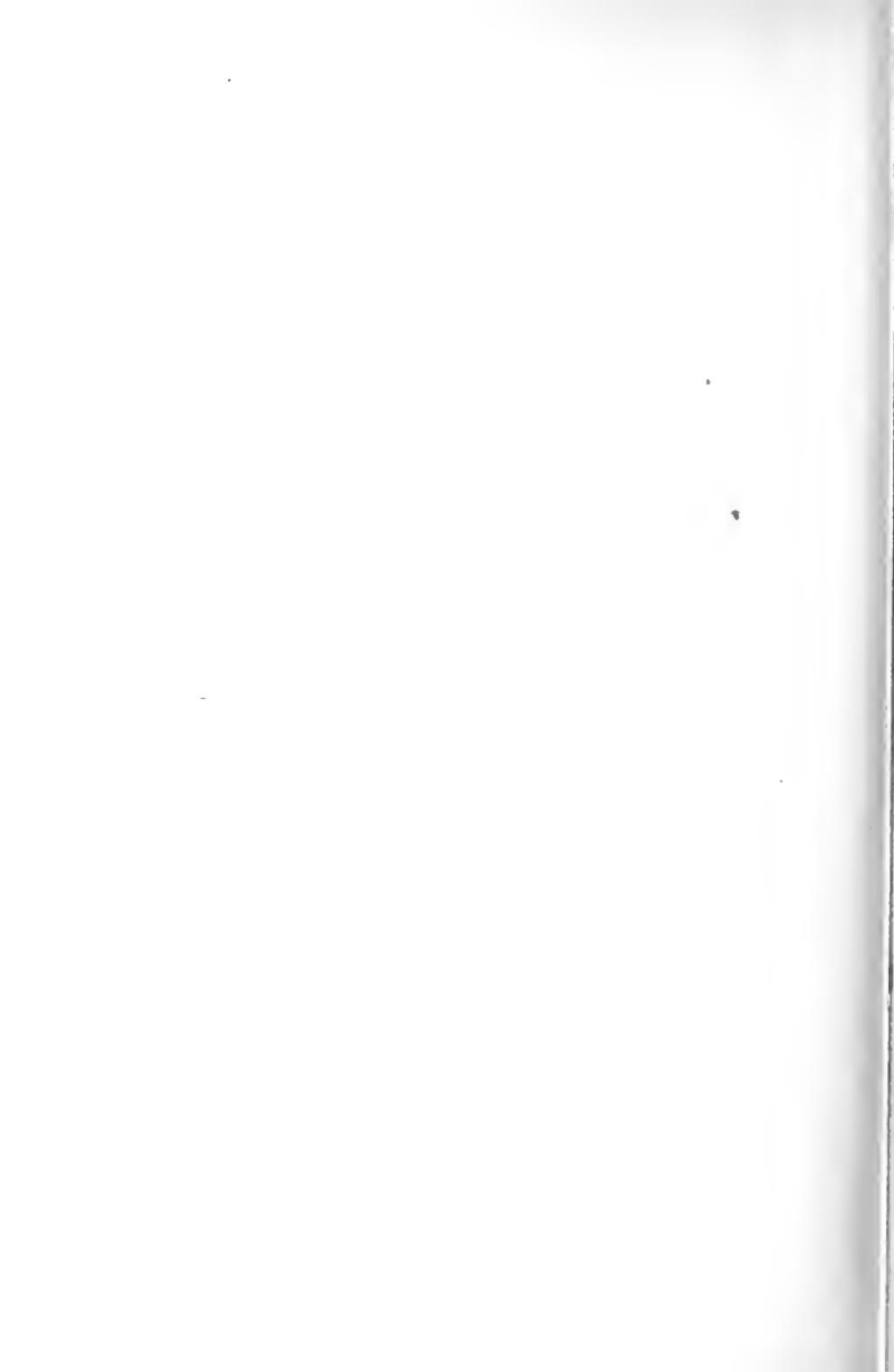
With marked power Mr. Harrison has depicted the exterior and political force and momentum of Eastern monasticism; that wonderful ideal of contemplation and renunciation as a means of saving the soul; the attempt to realise ideals outside of the world; the protest in solitude against the weight of injustice that had become unbearable. 'The Byzantine code of laws,' says Harnack, now reputed greatest theologian of our time—'our own social and moral views, too, have not yet emancipated themselves from its bonds— is in part a

strange congeries of pitiless Roman craft and of the monastic view of the world.' Tolstoi, says Harnack, is in his writings a genuine Greek monk, to whom the only chance of Church reform lies in a radical breach with culture and history.* Here, for an instant in our day, two strangely diverse schools unexpectedly meet, for Socialism, that is now so alarming to the rulers of the world, springs in its root from the same intolerable sense of the world's wrong, and insists on the same breach with culture and with history. In some at least of its types* and its ideals, Socialism comes nearer to what is called Byzantinism than either professors or opponents well know. Yet history — standing forces, institutions founded on social needs transient or abiding, forms and conventions — all hold their ground with a tremendous grip. However violent the supposed breach, the old Manichæan tale will still go on.

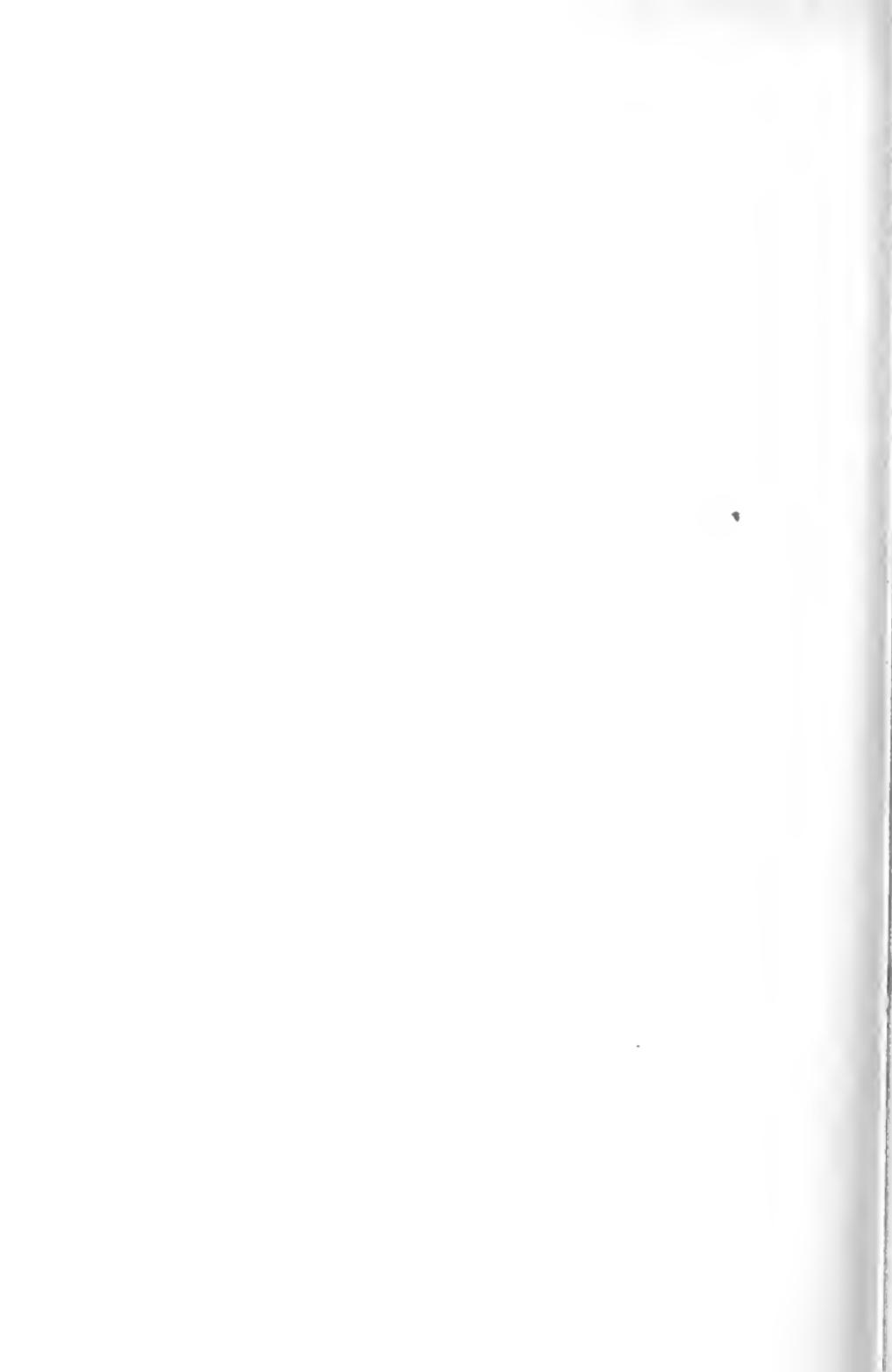
'When you see,' cried Bossuet, 'the old and the new Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, present themselves successively before you and fall, so to say, one upon the ruin of the other; all this frightful turmoil makes you feel that there is nothing solid among mankind, and that inconstancy and agitation is the peculiar lot of human things.' But then he detects or he manufactures a chain. The parts of so great a whole are linked together, he says. With the reserve of 'cer-

* *Monasticism.* By Adolph Harnack. Pp. 55, 60-61, Eng. trans. (1901)

tain extraordinary strokes in which God intended that His hand alone should be manifest,' no great change has ever taken place that had not its causes in ages that went before. These 'extraordinary strokes,' if they exist, and if he had pondered their significance, it must have puzzled Bossuet to reconcile with his theory of the chain—with what in modern language we should call the reign of law in history—which it was his express object to set forth. William of Tyre, the twelfth-century historian of the Crusades, hit this when he wrote: 'To no one should the things done by our Lord be displeasing, for all His works are right and good. But according to the judgment of men, it was marvellous how our Lord permitted the Franks (the people in the world who honour Him most) to be thus destroyed by the enemies of the faith.' Mr. Garrison's book, with no deliberate intention of his, for he is here a writer of neutral history, will give people of a reflective turn of mind, whether Jew, Mahometan, Christian, or Agnostic, if they be in the humour, many deep things to ruminate upon.



DEMOCRACY AND REACTION



DEMOCRACY AND REACTION*

I

WRITERS on democracy are legion. Of this great host of its erities in every tongue, England, the first nursery of modern democracy, contributes, I think, the fewest. In our own generation Mill stands at the head of them. His treatise on *Representative Government* argued the case against the good despot, while his little books on *Liberty* (1859) and the *Subjection of Women* (1869) carried the argument for emancipation to its extreme point. Intellectual reaction at once set in with Fitzjames Stephen's strenuous polemic against Mill's doctrine in his book on *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*. It was continued in a cooler vein by Bagehot's shrewd humour, and the subtlety of W. R. Greg. Maine next threw a frigid douche upon popular government, but he was too much of a bureaucrat alike by temperament and training, and the field of his observation of democracy was far too narrow, for his four essays on popular government to do anything like justice to their writer's powerful and capacious mind. Lecky's

* *Democracy and Reaction*. By L. T. Hobhouse. (London: Fisher Unwin, 1904.)

volumes on *Democracy and Liberty* have not generally been counted among that distinguished man's successful performances, and they will hardly rank above high-class pamphleteering. T. H. Green, the potent and stimulating Balliol tutor, a quarter of a century ago, rejected most of Mill's philosophy, yet he is justly described as Mill's 'true successor in the line of political thinkers.' The list might be extended, but it is not a long one. The steadiness of our institutions in their working accounts for the comparatively scanty speculative talk about them — comparatively with France, for instance.

Critics of democracy naturally approach it from many different directions, varying with the incidents and requirements of the time. They test it by its bearings, often almost accidental, upon some ruling social controversy or achievement of the hour; war, taxation, the rights of property, our duties to the poor, the rights of clerical congregations, or whatever else may show the good or evil of popular supremacy and its machinery. In fact, discussion about democracy is apt to be idle, unfruitful, and certainly tiresome, unless it is connected with some live contemporary issue. Anybody can see how irresistible an impulse was given to political thinking of all kinds by the Boer War, of which not long ago people heard so much, and of which they now appear to wish to hear so little. This conflict, far more momentous in its secret issues than the rough hurry of the day allows most people to perceive,

exhibited English democracy in so unexpected a light, raised so many questions both of politics and ethics, that it is no wonder if a large library shelf is crowded with printed reflections on Christianity and war, Christianity and Patriotism, Machiavellism and morality, the psychology of Jingoism, the empire and the nation, and all the rest of this literature of ferment. The little volume on which I now take leave to offer a few observations is one of the best products, as it is one of the most suggestive.*

Is it, asks the author, that 'the democratic State, the special creation of the modern world, and the pivot of the humanitarian movement, has itself become an obstruction to progress ? Does popular government necessarily entail a blunting of moral sensibility, a cheapening of national ideals, a wider scope for canting rhetoric and poor sophistry, as a cover for the realities of brutal wealth ? Have the ideals of the reforming era lost their efficacy, and is it clear that its watchwords cease to move ?' To put Mr. Hobhouse's questions rather differently, is it not true that even the old idols of theatre and market-place have fallen from their pedestals ; that an epidemic of unbelief has run through our Western world — unbelief in institutions, in principles,

* Mr. J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902) is another elaborate and well-compactd study, full of diligently collected material and coherent argument. He anticipates some of the ground now taken in *Democracy and Reaction*, and puts his case with both breadth and precision.

churches, parliaments, books, divinities, worst of all and at the root of all, in man himself? Such epidemics are familiar in the annals of mankind. They are part of the terrible manichæism of human history, the everlasting struggle between the principles of good and evil. They make us think of Luther's comparison of our race to the drunken man on horseback—you no sooner prop him on one side than he sways heavily to the other. What is the share of democracy in bringing the rider to this precarious and unedifying ease?

Mr. Hobhouse does not refer to Mill's memorable chapter on true and false democracy,* though we may be sure that he is well acquainted with it. Advocating one scheme or another for the representation of minorities in Parliament, Mill set out some of the difficulties of democracy, as we in England know democracy. The natural tendency of representative government, he said, as of modern civilisation generally, is towards collective mediocrity. This is a pregnant sentence: does time confirm it? Without arrogance I may perhaps assume that the Frenchman or the American would join the Englishman, and, comparing to-day with glowing epochs of illumination in the past, would admit that, outside of natural science and the material arts, our lamp just now burns low. Mill gives his reason for this somewhat depressing anticipation. Human improvement, he says, is a

* *Representative Government*, chap. vii.

product of many factors, and no form of power includes them all. The condition of progress in a community is the existence of a conflict between the strongest power in it and some rival power; between spiritual and temporal; military and industrial; king and subjects; orthodoxy and reformation. When victory puts an end to the strife, without another conflict succeeding, stagnation follows. The ascendancy of numbers is 'less unjust and, on the whole, less mischievous than many others, but the very same kind of dangers attends it, and even more certainly. For,' continues Mill, 'when the government is in the hands of One or a Few, the Many are always existent as a rival power, that may not be strong enough even to control the other, but whose opinion and sentiment are a moral, and even a social, support to all who, either from conviction or contrariety of interest, are opposed to any of the tendencies of the ruling authority. When the demoeraey is supreme, there is no One or Few strong enough for dissentient opinion and injured or menaced interest to lean upon.'

Schemes such as Mill favoured for protecting minorities in those systems of representative government which, like most modern writers, except M. Pobedonostseff, he counted one of the supreme human inventions, have not as yet attracted much support. But communities so unlike as Belgium and Australia are cases where

deadlock among balanced forces may draw attention in Mill's direction. Here it is enough to note that a writer whose plea for liberty contributed so powerful an impulse to democracy as it was accepted in England a generation back, never taught us that democracy was the only guarantee we needed for steady and unbroken progress. He knew too much history.

II

Whatever else democracy may be, it means in our modern age government by public opinion—the public opinion of a majority armed with a political or social supremacy by the electoral vote, from whatever social classes and strata that majority may be made up. Up to 1832, as all the books truly tell us, political power in England belonged to the territorial aristocracy, not insensible to public opinion outside in framing or administering laws, but still exercising decisive influence on its own account. In 1832 the currents became too strong for the old channels. Opinion in the middle class became the guide, though patricians and landed men long kept Cabinets to themselves, to say nothing of their monopoly of the benches at quarter sessions and the posts in army, navy, and diplomacy. They maintained the corn law for fourteen years; they had their own way in foreign policy, in spite of the Manchester men—the best representatives that the middle class has ever had.

Finally, everybody knows how in 1867 and 1885 our Demos, though not yet quite full grown to the stature of universal suffrage, was installed upon his throne, like his kinsman Demos in America, France, Germany. The effect has been indeed a surprise to those who made sure that, if you only gave the workman votes and secured a sufficiently cheap press, England might be trusted to beat her swords into ploughshares and her spears into pruning-hooks. Reformers overlooked the truth set out by Tocqueville when he said, 'Nations are like men; they are still prouder of what flatters their passions, than of what serves their interests.' The idea of empire intervened, partly because the circumstances of empire changed.

Between 1885 and 1900 Great Britain added between three and four million square miles and a population little short of sixty millions to her imperial dominion; and the expenditure on the two war services has risen since 1893 from thirty-two to nearly sixty millions of pounds.* It is not, however, on this well-worn and irresponsive string that Mr. Hobhouse seeks to harp. The change in national temper, or the emergence of unexpected forces and drifts in public opinion — that is what he tries to probe. Everybody who is capable of taking an interest in the deeper and more general aspect of our national affairs will be glad, first, that such a discussion has been raised (and it was in fact

* Estimated expenditure for 1908-9, 59 $\frac{1}{4}$ millions.

inevitable, unless the English faculty of political reflection had come to a full stop); next, that a deliberately reasoned contribution to it comes from a writer who has proved himself in other fields of thought* so acute, competent, and well prepared and vigorous as Mr. Hobhouse.

His description of the sources and processes by which public opinion in our time is formed is not lacking in trenchancy, and it might give a pleasure, certainly not intended by its author, to the cynical persons, either at home here or across the Channel, who regard popular government as elaborate dupery, were it not for the author's fervid perception and enforcement of the prime truth, that under every political or social question lies the moral question.

The very figure of John Bull as the typical Englishman seems out of date and inapplicable as an expression for the average Briton of the present day. The easy-going, stout, well-meaning, rather dull old gentleman, a little proud if the truth be told of his very dulness, and apt to conceive of it as an incident in that fundamental honesty which distinguished him from his sharp-witted neighbours, the well-nourished territorial magnate, slow-going, hard to move, but implacable when once stirred, narrow perhaps, but fundamentally just and honourable in all his dealings, is no fit representative of the average public opinion of our day. For that, we have ourselves coined a new abstraction; 'the man-in-the-street,' or 'the man-on-the-top-of-a-bus,' is now the typical representative of public opinion, and the man-in-the-street means the man who is hurrying from his

* E.g. *Mind in Evolution* (1901).

home to his office or to a place of amusement. He has just got the last news-sheet from his neighbour ; he has not waited to test or sift it ; he may have heard three contradictory reports, or seen two lying posters on his way up the street, but he has an expression of opinion ready on his lips, which is none the less confident because all the grounds on which it is founded may be swept away by the next report that he hears. The man-in-the-street is the man in a hurry ; the man who has not time to think, and will not take the trouble to do so if he has the time. He is the faithful reflex of the popular sheet and the shouting newsboy. . . . The man-in-the-street is familiar with everything. Nothing is new to him ; it is his business not to be surprised. He knows already all about any appeal that you can make to the better side of him, and he has long ago chopped it up in his mill of small talk and catch phrases, and reduced it to such a meaningless patter that the words which must be used have acquired trivial and lowering associations.

All this is vigorous satire, and it is true. Still, to check a despondent fit, let us remember Sir Robert Peel's words a dozen years before the first Reform Bill : 'The tone of England — of that great compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy, and newspaper paragraphs, which is called public opinion.'* If this was a true story in 1820, are we so much lower to-day ? And before being too sharp upon our democracy to-day, let us not forget, for instance, Burke's complaint of the Demos of his

* *Croker Papers*, i. 170.

day: 'It is but too true,' he cries, 'that there are many whose whole scheme of freedom is made up of pride, perverseness, and insolence. They feel themselves in a state of thraldom; they imagine that their souls are cooped and cabined in, unless they have some man, or some body of men, dependent on their mercy. The desire of having someone below them descends to those who are the very lowest of all; and a Protestant cobbler, debased by his poverty, but exalted by his share of the ruling Church, feels a pride in knowing it is by his generosity alone that the peer, whose footman's instep he measures, is able to keep his chaplain from a gaol. This disposition is the true souree of the passion in which many men in very humble life have taken to the American war. *Our* subjeets in Ameriea; *our* Colonies; *our* dependents. This lust of party power is the liberty they hunger and thirst for; and this Siren song of ambition has charmed ears that we would have thought were never organised to that kind of music.'

Let us at once say that Mr. Hobhouse is as far removed as possible from the temper of the mere croaker, the *frondeur*, the *mauvais coucheur*, or — to use the ugliest term in all politieal slang — the mugwump. No dilettante, his mind throws itself into energetic contact with circumstances. He faces the unwelcome facts of his time without any of the weak spirit of disenchantment, and with a manful determination that, though the world has

not in recent years gone his way, the battle is by no means over. The whole strain of his argument is positive and constructive, and though he has the high merit of being an idealist, he has long been a close, exact, and direct observer of working polities from day to day. Just as for the purposes of mental philosophy he investigated with scientific rigour the ways of the animals at the public gardens in Manchester, so in polities he rigorously attends to his details, while we are sensible all the time of the pulse of a strong humanity, and of that warm faith in social progress which is, in other words, faith in men, hope for men, and charity for men.

An accomplished Frenchman, now dead, one of the ten thousand critics of democracy, illustrates by a story of his friend Bersot his conviction that human nature will remain to the end pretty like itself, apart from forms of government or measures of social economy. One day Bersot, writing upon Arcachon and its pleasures, wound up his article by saying, 'As for happiness, why there, as everywhere else, you must yourself bring it with you.' So Scherer himself, in like spirit, could not but believe that it is the same with institutions. They depend on what men bring with them. In a less discouraged spirit, or rather with no discouragement of spirit at all, Mr. Hobhouse still recognises that self-government is not in itself a solution of all political and social difficulties. 'It is at best,' he

says, 'an instrument with which men who hold by the ideal of social justice and human progress can work, but when those ideals grow cold, it may, like other instruments, be turned to base uses.' The fundamental reform for which the times call is rather a reconsideration of the ends for which all civilised government exists; in a word, the return to a saner measure of social values. 'We shall be under no illusion,' he concludes, 'about democracy. The golden radiance of its morning hopes has long since faded into the light of common day. Yet, that dry light of noon serves best for those whose task it is to carry on the work of the world.'

III

The starting-point of Mr. Hobhouse's book is the practical operation of Imperialism and the imperial idea within the last fifteen or twenty years. He misses, by inadvertence I suppose, the historic origin of this far-reaching movement of the day, for he does not remind us that it first began in the rejection of Home Rule in 1886. Unionists, in resisting the new Liberal policy for Ireland, were naturally forced to make their appeal to all the feelings and opinions bound up with concentration, imperial Parliament, imperial unity, and determined mastery in the hands of 'the predominant partner.' Conservative reaction had set in during the general

election of the previous year, and had shown itself in the unconcealed schism between the two wings of the Liberal party (for the Liberal party is always by its essence a coalition). What precipitated this reaction in the direction of Imperialism was the proposal of Home Rule, and the arguments and temper in which its antagonists found their most effective resort. Perplexities in Egypt, that weighed quite as heavily on Lord Salisbury as on Mr. Gladstone, strengthened the same impression.

To the 'imperial idea' itself and the light in which it was offered to honourable, patriotic, and liberal-minded men, Mr. Hobhouse does full justice.

'See,' the Imperialist would say, 'this marvellous work of our race, the vast inheritance of the generations which we hold in trust for our descendants—in mere size the greatest Empire of history, in variety of interest, in the extraordinary complexity of its composition far surpassing all political societies that the world has ever known. Consider how it extends the laws of peace over prairie and jungle, mountain and steppe, subarctic ice and torrid forest; how it maintains order and administers justice with equal success for the brand-new mining community, for the ancient civilisation of the Ganges or the Nile, or for the primitive clan of the Indian hills. Is not this,' urges the enthusiast, 'among the greatest of human achievements, this unparalleled adaptability in arts of conquest and of government? And yet this is not the best. What is an infinitely greater matter is that where the British flag goes, go British freedom, British justice, an

absolutely incorruptible Civil Service, a scrupulous impartiality as between religion and races, an enthusiasm for the spread of that individual liberty and local self-government which have made England herself so great! . . . You talk perhaps of humanity—a vague, abstract idea. But do you not see that any genuine humanitarianism must be the result of a gradual broadening of those very sympathies which first make a man a good patriot? There was a time when love for England, as a whole, was too wide a conception, and men were Mercians or Northumbrians, but not Englishmen. Just as it was an advance when the love for England superseded this narrow provincialism, so is it an advance when Imperialism supersedes your narrow Little Englandism. You may say that Empire means force, aggression, conquest. That may have been so in the past, but we live in an age when Empire is free, tolerant, and unaggressive, and if we still acquire territory, we acquire it not for ourselves but for civilisation. You may object to the method by which the Empire was built up, but here it is in being—a great fact, a tremendous responsibility.'

‘Taken at its face value,’ as Mr. Hobhouse says, no wonder that this appeal proved seductive and almost irresistible. This parenthesis, by the way, on Little Englandism deserves a word or two of quotation. Is there nothing to be proud of in Little England, in her history, her literature, her thought, the great men that she has borne for the world, her struggle for political and religious freedom? ‘The question might be raised whether the British Empire as a whole has any history to show which compares with the history of Little

England; any science, any literature, any art; in fine, any great collective military achievement, worthy to be weighed in the scale against the resistance of Little England to Philip the Second or to Napoleon. A great Imperialist once coupled the name of Little England with the policy of surrender. It was a libel. Little England never surrendered. On the contrary, she three times encountered Powers which aspired to the mastery of the world, and three times overthrew them. The genuine pride of patriotism is surely lost when littleness of geographical extent can be construed into a term of reproach. It is the other face of the same vulgarity which boasts that a single British colony is greater than the land that produced Kant and Goethe.'

Anybody in whom the boisterous intoxication of the last ten years has not extinguished all capacity of candid thought, whatever way his conclusions upon particular policies and events within that time may lean, will find this salutary vein well worth pondering. One remark occurs to me upon those glorious things in passing. They were done when England was under the sway either of monarch, or aristocracy, or both. Of a democracy originally British, the most astonishing and triumphant achievement so far has been the persevering absorption and incorporation across the Atlantic, of a ceaseless torrent of heterogeneous elements from every point of the compass into one

united, stable, industrious, and pacific State with eighty millions of population, combining the centralised concert of a federal system with local independence, and uniting collective energy with the encouragement of individual freedom. How does this stand in comparison with the Roman Empire, or Roman Church, or the Byzantine Empire, or Russia, or Charles the Great, or Napoleon? That, however, is digression. Meanwhile, Mr. Hobhouse, with energy of perception and without vehemence or excess of language, contrasts the plausible promises of Imperialism with its performance, and here South Africa obviously supplies the leading case. He gives no undue proportion to the Boer War, and does not allow it to draw him too far from either the central line or the rationalist temper of his speculation. Still, the annexation, through military conquest, of two small States, lawfully inhabited, possessed, and governed by white men, is so striking an example of reaction — I am not sure whether against democracy or not, but — against our ruling maxims for a century past, that it was impossible for him not to dwell upon it. I will not take the reader over the still heated embers of this dire conflagration.

By Imperialism the better men of the school understood a free informal union with the Colonies, combined with a conscientious and tolerant government of tropical dependencies. This was in

essence the conception of the Empire bequeathed by the older generation of Liberals, and precisely the antithesis of present-day Imperialism, the operative principle of which is the forcible establishment and maintenance of racial ascendancy. 'The trap laid for Liberals in particular consisted in this—that they were asked to give in their adhesion to Imperialism as representing admiration for an Empire which more and more has been shaped upon Liberal lines. Having given their assent, they were insensibly led on to the other meaning of Imperialism — a meaning in which, for all practical purposes, these principles are set aside. And there was a medium to facilitate the change. For if the Empire was so liberally formed, so free, tolerant, and unaggressive, could we have too much of it? Should we not extend its blessing to those that sit in darkness? And so, by a seductive blending of the old Adam of national vanity with the new spirit of humanitarian zeal, men are led on to the destruction of their own principles.'

The story is an old one. In these high matters let us be sure that nothing is as new as people think. Names are new. Light catches aspects heretofore unobserved. Temperature rises and falls. Yet the elements of the cardinal controversies of human society are few, and they are curiously fixed. Though the ages use ideas differently, the rival ideas themselves hold on in their pre-appointed

courses. Democracy is not new, and reaction against it is no newer. The questions so vigorously and acutely sketched by Mr. Hobhouse are old friends with fresh faces and changed apparel. To go no further back than the sixteenth century, we may trace in the most important of the deep controversies raised by him a familiar outline of the conflict between the principles of Machiavelli on the one hand, and on the other the principles of Bodin and all the vast crowd of anti-Machiavellian writers. Terms alter, but the issue is constant — force against right; reason of State against maxims of ethics; policy against justice and truth; serpent against dove, fox against lion; narrow and local expediency against the broad and the eternal; private morals the test or not the test of public morals.

To these general aspects of his subject Mr. Hobhouse comes speedily enough, and even the reader who dislikes his expostulations against satraps and alien capitalists, soon finds himself in the smooth waters of a grave and varied inquiry into the causes of a far-reaching change in the temper of the times. It is, as Mr. Hobhouse says, by no means peculiar to our own country or to the sphere of politics. It is common to the civilised world, and penetrates every department of life and thought. If it is to be summed up in a word, he tells us, 'we should call it a reaction against humanitarianism.' Humanitarianism is now dis-

missed as sentimentality. ‘Its efforts at internationalism have yielded to a revival of national exclusiveness, seen in the growth of armaments, the revival or aggravation of Protectionism, the growth of anti-alien legislation. The doctrine of democratic rights has been replaced by the demand for efficiency, or by the unadorned gospel of blood and iron. Indeed, the bare conception of right in public matters has lost its force, and given place to political “necessity” and “reasons of State.” Hence human wrongs and human sufferings do not move us as they did.’

For this sorry transformation he finds four causes. First, he names ‘decay in vivid and profound religious beliefs.’ This decay was in process a generation ago, but its effects at that time were set off by the rise of a humanitarian feeling which, partly in alliance with the recognised Churches, and partly outside them, took in a measure the place of the old convictions, supplying a stimulus and a guidance to effort, and yielding a basis for a serious and rational public life. These promises have not come true. A good-natured scepticism has risen up, ‘not only about the other world, but also about the deeper problems and higher interests of this.’

It is a pity that the author has done no more than touch a question that so deserves or needs to be definitely explored. The relations of Christianity and the Churches to democracy, empire, war, have

never been of profounder interest or moment than they are to-day. We might have expected the gospel that teaches man to love his neighbour as himself, and to regard all men as equally the sons of one divine Father—such a gospel might have been expected to weaken pride of race, and all the passions that are bound up with imperial conquest. Yet that has hardly been so. As for empire, it has often been pointed out for how many centuries the Christian empire was not less despotic than the pagan. Why, again, should decay in dogmatic beliefs about the supernatural lead to a decline in the influence of Christian ethics? All this crucial theme, however, goes far too deep even to approach in a parenthetic paragraph.

If the decay of beliefs is the first element in the reaction against humanitarianism, the second is the diffusion in thought of a stream of German idealism which has swelled the current of retrogression from 'the plain human rationalistic way of looking at life and its problems.' This point is excellently described. According to the idealistic doctrines to which Mr. Hobhouse imputes such mischief, 'every institution and every belief is for it alike a manifestation of a spiritual principle, and thus for everything there is an inner and more spiritual interpretation. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that the effect of idealism on the world in general, has been mainly to sap intellectual and moral sincerity, to excuse men in their consciences

for professing beliefs which in the meaning ordinarily attached to them they do not hold, to soften the edges of all hard contrasts between right and wrong, truth and falsity, to throw a gloss over stupidity, and prejudice, and caste, and tradition, to weaken the basis of reason, and disincline men to the searching analysis of their habitual ways of thinking.'

A third and still more effectual element of reaction has been the career of Prince Bismarek, itself a concrete exemplification of the Hegelian State. 'The prestige of so great an apparent success naturally compelled imitation, and to the achievements of Bismarek, as we are dealing with the forces that have moulded opinion in our own day, we must add the whole series of trials in which the event has apparently favoured the methods of blood and iron, and discredited the cause of liberty and justice.'

After all, however, and this is Mr. Hobhouse's fourth cause, 'by far the most potent intellectual support of the reaction has been neither the idealistic philosophy nor the impression made by contemporary events, but the belief that physical science had given its verdict in favour—for it came to this—of violence and against social justice.' In other words, Darwinism. 'But those who have applied Darwin's theories to the science of society have not as a rule troubled themselves to understand Darwin any more than the science of society.

What has filtered through into the social and political thought of the time has been the belief that the time-honoured doctrine "Might is Right" has a scientific foundation in the laws of biology. Progress comes about through a conflict in which the fittest survives. It must, therefore, be unwise in the long run — however urgent it seems for the sake of the present generation — to interfere with the struggle. We must not sympathise with the beaten and the weak, lest we be tempted to preserve them. The justice, the mercy, the chivalry, which would induce the conqueror to forbear from enjoying the full fruits of his victory, must be looked on with suspicion. It is better to smite the Amalekite hip and thigh, and let the conquering race replenish the earth.'

The exploration of this, the deepest reaching of all the causes of reaction against the humanitarian movement of better times, is the most substantial of the contributions of this volume to social thinking. It is a rigorous and scientific argument against the biological view that since men are animals, the laws regulating human development must be identical with those we observe in the breeding of shorthorns or of fan-tailed pigeons; or that the pigeon-fancier has more to teach us of the conditions of human progress, than Gibbon or Mommsen.

The question on other sides of it was raised in early days after the speculations of Darwin and

Wallace saw the light, by W. R. Greg, in a well-known paper on the Non-Survival of the Fittest and Civilisation antagonistic to the Law of Natural Selection,* and it has been abundantly treated by a host of eminent men, notably in Huxley's lecture on Evolution and Ethics, and in a crowd of writings since. I will not try to follow Mr. Hobhouse through his two chapters on Evolution and Sociology and the Useful and Right; in this place the statement of his conclusion will be enough:—

A just conception of evolution does not support the view that the struggle for existence is the condition of progress. It lends no sanction to the prevailing worship of force. On the contrary, it supplies a broad justification for the ethical conception of progress as consisting essentially in the evolution of mind, that is to say, in the unfolding of an order of ideas by which life is stimulated and guided. It has been the misfortune of our time that attention has been diverted from this ethical, or if the expression be preferred spiritual, order in which the essentials of progress lie, to the biological conditions that affect man only as the human animal. A clearer view of the meaning of evolution should restore the mind to its rightful place, and thus justify the reformers who insisted on the application of ethical principles to political affairs, as against the materialists for whom the ethical consciousness is a bye-product of forces to which in any conflict it must necessarily give precedence. . . . Amid all differences and conflicts one idea is common to the modern

* *Enigmas of Life.* (Eighteenth edition, 1901.)

democratic movement, whether it takes the shape of revolution or reform, of Liberalism or Socialism. The political order must conform to the ethical ideal of what is just. The State must be founded on Right. . . . The biological view of evolution opposes this ideal as unscientific and in the end self-defeating. It is for this reason that the biological teaching is so profoundly reactionary and lends itself so handily to the popular cynicism of the day. A truer view of evolution, on the other hand, exhibits the attempt to remodel society by a reasoned conception of social justice, as precisely the movement required at the present stage of the growth of mind.

IV

A French statesman some years ago told a public audience that if a patient linguist or man of real genius would only give them a rational dictionary of party appellations, such an one would earn a statue of fine gold. In the mere strife of party this is not quite certain, for it might happen that too severely rational an investigation of creeds, programmes, and leading persons, and of the precise differences among them, would end, if the dictionary had a great sale, in the disastrous overthrow of many a shrine, and ruin for the political silversmiths who wrought such things. In considering, however, a more or less theoretic disquisition like the book before us, we may as well try for clear ideas about our terms. Reaction, for instance, may be only an enemy's

name for a new sort of revolution; and some will hold that one crucial subject for England in our day is not democracy and reaction—as Mr. Hobhouse puts it—but democracy and expansion; democracy and necessities of a vast and heterogeneous empire over sea, how far compatible and reconcilable. Or is our problem at its root, democracy as the antithesis of plutocracy; the form and surface of political power in possession of the many, with all the realities of social power in the grasp of the few? Is this the way in which our case would offer itself to a modern Aristotle, Machiavel, or Montesquieu?

It is no mere platitude that we have reached the threshold of a new age. Democracy, nationality, socialism, the constitution of the modern State, the standing of the Churches—all have come within the attraction of forces heretofore unknown. Science applied to material arts has stimulated production, facilitated transport, multiplied and shortened the channels of communication, made gold as mobile as quicksilver. In different words, the habitable globe has undergone consolidation that only half a century ago would have seemed a miracle. Yet this consolidation, however it may have tended towards liberty and political equality, has by no means tended towards fraternity. The industrial revolution has changed the shape and softened the methods of international rivalry, but hard rivalry remains. It is, again, making civilisation urban, and in England, they say, 70 per cent. of our people live in towns.

It has, among other cardinal results, magnified by a hundred eyes and arms that power of high finance which has been called 'the most subtle, ubiquitous, and potent of modern political forces.'* What passes for public opinion all over Europe is penetrated by unseen, unsuspected, and not overscrupulous influences. Your Demos, they say, is only a giant marionette, whose wires are pulled from Vienna, Berlin, Paris, New York, the City of London. Demos is not a living creature, with heart, brain, conscience, or even arms and hands to be called its own ; it is a puppet of banks and stock-exchanges. This surprising transformation is much more than reaction, much more than simple ebb after flow. Nor can outer changes such as these have swept over the fabric of the world, without carrying changes in their train to match, in all the hopes and fears and aims and affections, in all the catalogue of thoughts on right and duty and relation to extra-mundane things, and the rest of the deep elements on which at last the reality of the individual man is moulded. Here is far more than the mere swing of reaction.

What is democracy ? When we are told, for instance, that the establishment of democracy is the great social fact of the Western world between 1830 and, say, 1875, has this been something or nothing more than a political fact ? What are the moral bearings of it ; can there be a political fact

*Sir Courtenay Ilbert's *Romanes Lecture on Montesquieu*, p. 40.

without them? Is democracy only a form of government, or is it a state of society and a name for all those social agencies of which form of government is no more than one? Is it only decentralisation, a shifting of the centre of administrative gravity, or a sublime baptismal conversion to a new faith? Is it only the sovereignty of the people, or one of the secrets of general civilisation? Do you mean simply escape from feudalism, and the establishment of trial by jury, responsibility of the executive, spiritual independence, no taxation without representation? Do you mean a doctrine or a force; constitutional parchment or a glorious evangel; perfected machinery for the wire-puller, the party tactician, the spoilsman, and the boss, or the high and stern ideals of a Mazzini or a Tolstoi?

No answer, at once concise and comprehensive, to this leading question seems attainable. Democracy, said Mazzini, is 'the progress of all through all, under the leadership of the best and the wisest.' The words are eloquent, but they demand analysis, and they would hardly stand it without much elucidation. Every syllable hides a pitfall. The ideal may be exalted and may be just, but the facts of life, of nature, and of history are fatally against it. Are we to seek the democratic principle in Bentham's formula, that 'everybody is to count for one and nobody for more than one'? Are those right who describe the true democratic principle as meaning that none shall have power

over the people, and complain that this is perversely taken to mean that none shall be able to restrain or elude the people?

Is democracy another name for Liberalism? Fifty or forty years ago the common superficial answer to this absorbing question would have been Yes, and Mr. Hobhouse implies as much. The old school of English politicians to whose memory our author is attached, were not particularly fond of the name of democrat, and even for a time preferred radical to liberal. Though the idea and the thing were deeply and primarily English, the use of Liberal as a name for political opinions and political men seems to have come to us from France. Whether in such application it was first devised by Madame de Staël or by Chateaubriand, the books appear unable to decide. Among us the name Liberal in this sense was originally a taunt thrown by Tories against Whigs a century ago. Then it was cheerfully picked up by the judicious Whigs on their own account, as a word of really rather respectable associations than otherwise, just as after the Reform Bill the Tory slowly mellowed himself into Conservative. Signs abound that at no distant day both names may in their turn be superseded; for men, like children, break their toys, and party catchwords, like poems and philosophies, must undergo their fates and fashions.

Some great personages of adventurous mind were by no means sure that democracy means Liberalism.

Disraeli did not think so, nor Prince Bismarck; no more, as I judge, did Cavour. The first of that remarkable trio believed that democracy in England abounded in conservative elements, and the course of events, so well set forth and so acutely analysed in the volume before us, shows that Disraeli did not read the stars amiss. Bismarck, though he was a strong mainspring of the reaction that Mr. Hobhouse holds up to our reasoned reprobation, never quarrelled with the famous democratic fundamental, that 'governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed,' nor did he think his own ideal inconsistent with it. 'The ideal,' he said, 'that has always floated before me has been a monarchy that should be so far controlled by an independent national representation — according to my notions, representing classes and callings — that monarch or parliament would not be able to alter the existing statutory position before the law separately, but only *communi sensu*; with publicity and public criticism, by press and Diet, of all political proceedings.' And it has been truly said that Bismarck's story of his relations with Lassalle 'is sufficient proof that he did not discover any ultimate gulf existing between his ideal, and that ideal of a crowned social democracy, which glittered before the imagination of the brilliant Jew.'*

* See a remarkable article on Bismarck in the *Contemporary Review* for January 1899, by William Clarke — a thinking man and an excellent writer, whose premature loss will long be deplored by all who knew him.

We need not, however, go to conservative heroes either at home or abroad, for proof that liberal and democrat are not identical or co-extensive terms. In more than one time and land the formula of liberalism has been, '*Everything for the people, nothing by the people.*' The word authoritarian is an ugly word in structure and in signification alike; it only forced or burrowed its way into English a few years ago, and it has been needed to denote that sub-species of the liberal genus, of which Gambetta was the first and most imposing example in our time. A brilliant, learned, versatile French critic once pointed out that Voltaire was the best representative of the French spirit, because he was of all men the most absolutist, and because Liberalism, the opposite of absolutism, is not French. Stirred by the war against clericals and the congregations, M. Faguet in a short book,* marked by a keen and searching irony that is characteristic of him, not seldom approaching to splenetic paradox, insists that his countrymen have still to undergo their education in Liberalism. They are all *éstatistes*, he declares, accustomed to submit to despotism, eager therefore in turn to practise it; only liberal when they are in a minority, divided between imperious jacobinism and tyrannical catholicism. How far all that can be sustained in the facts of the day, this is no occasion to inquire. At least the glowing furnace across the Channel may remind

* *Le Libéralisme.* Par Emile Faguet (1902).

us that, if reaction has been severe in England, democracy has during the same time been going through fiery ordeals in other forms in other places. Democracy, says M. Faguet, is not liberalism; it is not even liberty; it is parallel, but contradictory. Undoubtedly this is true if we accept some authoritative definitions. Liberalism, according to one Belgian publicist, 'is individualism; it means free examination in the intellectual order, independence in the political order, unlimited expansion of individual activity in the economic order. Its opposite is on one side Socialism, which sacrifices the individual to collectivity; on the other Ultramontanism, that absorbs him in the Church.' *

v

It is on the ideals of the eighteenth century, Mr. Hobhouse assures us, that, say what we may, political Liberalism is founded. That is true, but not without at least one not unimportant qualification, which Mr. Hobhouse will let me make. The diplomacy of the three old continental monarchies in the middle years of the eighteenth century was as crooked and as sinister as Europe has ever seen. It was the age of Frederick, Catherine, Kaunitz; and the first partition of Poland is enough to dis-

* *Réflexions*: Emile Banning (Brussels, 1899), p. 50. Banning took a part in the early stage of Congo affairs, but the King quarrelled with him later.

sipate any dream that the eighteenth century was a golden age of public law and international right. It was not until the final decade that Hope came down from heaven to earth — the only blessing that was left behind, after the fatal opening of Pandora's box in Central and Eastern Europe had let loose a cloud of evil torments upon men. Not at once did social hope take its throne in human imagination as the richest solace and inspirer. If we were asked what is the animating faith not *only* of political liberalism all over the civilised world to-day, but also of hosts of men and women who could not tell us of what school they are, the answer would be that what guides, inspires, and sustains modern democracy is conviction of upward and onward progress in the destinies of mankind. It is startling to think how new is this conviction; to how many of the world's master-minds what to us is the most familiar and most fortifying of all great commonplaces, was unknown. Scouring a library, you come across a little handful of fugitive and dubious sentences in writers of ancient and mediæval time. Bacon's saying, also to be found a long time earlier in Esdras, about antiquity of time being the world's youth, was, as everybody knows, a pregnant hint, but it hardly announced the gospel of progress as now held by most English-speaking persons. Modern belief in human progress had no place among ideals even in the eighteenth century, if we take Voltaire, Montes-

quieu, Diderot for their exponents; and Rousseau actually thought the history of civilisation a record of the fall of man. Turgot, followed by his faithful disciple Condorcet, first brought into full light as a governing law of human things the idea of social progress, moral progress, progress in manners and institutions. It was events, as is their wont, that ripened the abstract doctrine into an active moral force. Faith in perfectibility shook for a season faith in authority and tradition and all things established, to its very foundations. After shining in the ascendant in varied phases for the best part of a century or more, the new faith was exposed to the same critical artillery as the old.

What is Progress? It is best to be slow in the complex arts of polities. To hurry to define is rash. If we want a platitude, there is nothing like a definition. Perhaps most definitions hang between platitude and paradox. There are said to be ten thousand definitions of Religion. Poetry must count almost as many, and Liberty or Happiness hardly fewer. Define it as we may, faith in Progress has been the mainspring of Liberalism in all its schools and branches. To think of Progress as a certainty of social destiny, as the benevolent outcome of some eternal cosmic law, has been indeed a leading Liberal superstition — the most splendid and animated of superstitions, if we will, yet a superstition after all. It often deepens into a kind of fatalism, radiant, confident, and infinitely hope-

ful, yet fatalism still, and, like fatalism in all its other forms, fraught with inevitable peril, first to the effective sense of individual responsibility, and then to the successful working of principles and institutions of which that responsibility is the vital sap. Of this fatalism it is not presumptuous to call America the reigning instance at our present time. The young are apt to be too sure. 'Half of history,' said Doudan, 'is made up of unexpected events that force the stream into a different course; and, like one of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, 'tis at a door hidden in the wall, that the important personages in the drama make their entries and their exits.'

VI

Like democracy, Liberalism is a name with many shades of meaning, a volume of many chapters. In purpose and aspiration it has undergone a thousand vicissitudes. If some historian—and we could wish that Mr. Hobhouse might be he—were to embark upon the story of Liberalism, where should he begin? The Middle Ages abounded in theories of popular rights with revolutionary applications. The attempt during the Great Schism and the quarrels of rival popes to establish a sort of parliamentary government by way of periodical councils, as the ruling power of the Church* proved

* See Dr. Law's *Collected Essays and Reviews* (1904), p. 110.

a failure; but protests against central authority in that transcendent sphere scattered seeds of doubt and revolt over the whole area of government, spiritual and temporal. The Reformation brought the supremacy of prince over people into violent question. The stalwart Levellers in Cromwell's army were strong for law of nature, equality of rights, and the homely pithy doctrine that 'the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as much as the greatest he; and a man is not bound to a government that he has not had a voice to put himself under.' Then came the expulsion of James the Second, and the reasoned vindication of liberal principles from the pen of Locke. But it was the memorable declaration by the American colonists in 1776 that opened the page of the modern democratic evangel — how among self-evident truths are these: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are formed among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. None of this was new in thought. As American historians point out, Jefferson was here using the old vernacular of English thought and aspiration — a vernacular rich in noble phrase and stately tradition, to be found in a hundred champions of a hundred camps, in Buchanan, Milton, Hooker, Locke, Jeremy Taylor, Roger Williams, and many another

humbler but no less strenuous pioneer and confessor of freedom. These were the tributary fountains that, as time went on, swelled into the broad confluence of our modern ages. How great was the debt of Milton or Locke to Jesuit writers—Mariana, Molina, and others under the Spanish crown—we need not here inquire, though the question has an interest of its own. It is circumstance that inspires, selects, and moulds the thought. The commanding novelty in 1776 was the transformation of general thought into a particular polity; of theoretic construction into a working system. Republic became a consecrated and symbolic ensign, carried with torches and flags among the nations. To-day it is hard to imagine any rational standard that would not make the American Revolution—an insurrection of thirteen little colonies with a population of three millions scattered among savages in a distant wilderness—a mightier event in many of its aspects and its effects upon the great wide future of the world, than the volcanic convulsion in France in 1789 and onwards.

The Frenchman would begin his exploration of modern Liberalism with Rousseau. The *Social Contract* (1762) is one of the half-dozen or half-score books that have either wrought, or else announced, revolutions in human thought. By its first vibrating sentence—‘Man is born free; yet everywhere he is in chains’—a passionate thrill

was sent through that generation and the next. Thirteen years after the portentous document was launched at Philadelphia in 1776, the revolutionists in Paris tried their hands. The French Revolution came. Of no event in history are estimates so various. Some explain it as the upheaval of the Celtic sub-soil out of the Roman stratum which formed the overlying arable land, representing wealth, intelligence, energy. To others it is the master-instance of the genius of France, so luminous and so glowing; so combining light with warmth; so full, as Döllinger says, of seductive and penetrating communicability. The French Revolution, cried the trenchant De Maistre comprehensively, has a satanic character. Victor Hugo has boldly contended for the Revolution that it was the greatest step in progress that humanity has made since Christ. Goethe, on the contrary, the supreme intelligence of that age, said: 'We can discern in this monstrous catastrophe nothing but a relentless outbreak of natural forces; no trace of that which we love to signalise as liberty.' Here, too, our island had a share, for it is ideas that matter, and America also had a share. The historical thinker, like Montesquieu, equally with the anti-historical thinker, like Voltaire and Rousseau, both borrowed political ideas, and some ideas deeper than political, from England. Lafayette and Brissot and the Girondists drew their inspiration from the principles that

a dozen years before had triumphed in America. ‘Ah,’ said Marie Antoinette, when the thunderbolts fell around her, ‘the time of illusions is past, and we must now pay dear for all our infatuation and enthusiasm for the American war.’ Napoleon, while still only Consul, standing at Rousseau’s grave in the Isle of Poplars, said, ‘It would have been better for the repose of France if this man had never existed. It was he who prepared the French Revolution.’ ‘I should have thought,’ a companion cried, ‘that it was not for you of all people to complain of the Revolution.’ ‘Ah, well,’ said Napoleon, ‘the future will show whether it would not have been better for the repose of the world, that neither Rousseau nor I had ever existed.’

The declaration of the Rights of Man sprang into flame — the beacon-light of continental Liberalism in Europe ever since. ‘The representatives of the people,’ said the framers of it, ‘constituted as a national assembly, considering that ignorance, forgetfulness, or contempt of the rights of man, are the only causes of public misfortunes and the corruption of governments, have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of man.’ Men, they went on, are born free and equal in natural and imprescriptible rights; and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression. Liberty consists in being able to do whatever does not hurt

other people, and the limits of natural rights can only be determined by law as distinct from arbitrary power. No set of propositions framed by human ingenuity and zeal have ever let loose more swollen floods of sophism, fallacy, cant, and rant than all this. Yet let us not mistake. The American and French declarations held saving doctrine, vital truths, and quickening fundamentals. Party names fade, forms of words grow hollow, the letter kills; what was true in the spirit lived on, for the world's circumstance needed and demanded it.

VII

After 1815 Liberalism was kept rigorously under, but the fires never died. Bottomless controversies for freedom raged for two or three generations about charters, securities, and guarantees. The questions that for many years held the field in Europe were political—forms of government, details of parliamentary machinery, balance in constitutions, the virtues of suffrage universal or of suffrage limited, the comparative merits of republic and monarchy. The people were to be sovereign. If one state appropriated a piece of territory, a plebiscite was sometimes taken of the wishes of the inhabitants—a recognition of popular principles according to some, by others called mere revolutionary comedy. In Naples in 1820 a revolution was brought to a glorious, joyful, and intoxicating

end by the grant of a constitution, of which neither the King who conceded, nor the people who went mad over it, had ever read a word, and which they knew nothing about. This was only one episode in a hundred, of the same struggle, the same intoxication, the same collapse. A whole series of revolts followed in Northern Italy. There was a Spanish revolution, and a Greek insurrection. Then the flame broke out in France in 1830, and there came the three days of Paris, the days of Brussels, the days of Warsaw. Even our steadfast England had its Bristol riots, and the supersession of the landed oligarchy by the ten-pound householder. Over three hundred different constitutions were promulgated in Europe between the years 1800 and 1880. So slow have men been in discovering that the forms of government are much less important than the forces behind them. Forms are only important as they leave liberty and law to awaken and control the energies of the individual man, while at the same time giving its best chance to the common good.

Strange and devious are the paths of history. Broad shining channels get mysteriously silted up; many a time what seemed a glorious high-road, proves no more than a mule-track or mere *cul-de-sac*. Think of Canning's flashing boast, when he insisted on the recognition of the Spanish republics in South America—that he had called a New World into existence, to redress the balance of the Old. This is one of the sayings—of which sort

many another might be found—that make the fortune of a rhetorician, yet stand ill the wear and tear of time and circumstance. The New World that Canning called into existence has turned out a scene of singular disenchantment. Though not without glimpses on occasion of that heroism and courage and even wisdom, that are the attributes of man almost at the worst, the tale has been a tale of anarchy and disaster, still leaving a host of perplexities for statesmen both in America and in Europe. It has left also to those of a philosophic turn of mind one of the most interesting of all the problems to be found in the whole field of social, ecclesiastical, religious, and racial movement. Why exactly is it that we do not find in the south as we find in the north of the western hemisphere a powerful federation, a great Spanish-American people, stretching from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn? To answer that question would be to shed a flood of light upon many deep historic forces in the Old World, of which, after all, these movements of the New are but a prolongation and more manifest extension.

Meanwhile, what passed by the half-mystic name of Revolution underwent a striking change, and the epoch of nationalities opened. The secret associations of the Carbonari had kept liberal thought and aims in active glow, during the years of Bourbon Restoration in France and of Austrian rule in the Italian Peninsula. The uprising against

the yoke of classic tradition in literature was another side of the same liberal movement of men's minds, that made half Europe chafe against the treaties of Vienna and the Holy Alliance. In this uprising, England may be proud to recall that in spite of all his tinsel the splendid strength and daring energy of Byron set him among the titanic forces. A passage of Mazzini brings back the spirit of that new era. 'This yearning of the human mind,' he wrote, 'towards an indefinite progress, this force that urges the generations onwards towards the future; this impulse of universal association; the banner of young Europe waving on every side; this varied, multiform, endless warfare everywhere going on against tyranny; this cry of the nations arising from the dust to reclaim their rights, and call their rulers to account for the injustice and oppression of ages; this crumbling of ancient dynasties at the breath of the people; this anathema upon old creeds, this restless search after new; this youthful Europe springing from the old, like the moth from the chrysalis; this glowing life arising in the midst of death; this world in resurrection—is not this poetry?' *

Here, and in many another noble word, we hear the accent of romantic democracy in that bygone time. The place of freedom as the moving ideal of liberal schools and parties was taken by the principle of nationality, advanced on behalf not only of

* *Life and Writings of Mazzini*, i. 152.

Italians, but of Magyars, Greeks, Belgians, Roumanians. The banner of Young Italy, with its colours of white, red, and green, bore on one side the words *Liberty, Equality, Humanity*, and on the other *Unity, Independence*. Such is political metempsychosis in Western history, the ceaseless transmigration of the ideals to which men with outstretched hands and straining gaze, from age to age make their passionate appeal. Yet diverse meanwhile and vast are the disputable things covered by the alluring name of nationality.

VIII

When the French set Europe in a blaze by their Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, they were nearly all of them thinking of equality in political power. That was to bring the new heaven and the new earth. It was pointed out at an early stage of this vast change in the modern world, that not only equality of right but equality of fact is the real goal of the social art. Few of the great political insurgencies of history have been unaccompanied by racing economic currents. This is not to say, as Proudhon said, that all revolutions are economic revolutions. For the mightiest changes have come from religious and moral changes in men's hearts. Still, historians have been too prone to underestimate the element of truth in the dictum, 'There is no change in social order without a change in

property.' The revolt of the American colonies had its first sources in the restriction by English law of markets for American cotton, tobacco, hides, rice; the rights of man were like an afterthought. In our own Civil War, partly political and still more ecclesiastical, Winstanley and his diggers on St. George's Hill were rude precursors of the socialistic philosophy of to-day. The French Revolution itself was on one side of it a Peasant War. The middle class of Paris and the towns were political, but the countrymen burnt the châteaux and hunted out the landlords for reasons not set out among the rights of man. Even in Paris poor Caius Gracehus Babeuf got many to agree with him, that community of goods is the only way of rooting out the egotism that for six thousand years had produced all the crimes and all the sufferings of mortal man. But they cut off his head, and here, as many another time, the blood of martyrs proved *not* to be the seed of the Church.

When the movement of 1830 came, it broke up the confederacy of Europe against the revolution, planted the system of government by parliaments, and opened the way for socialist and clerical parties.* The revolution of 1848 came, and it wrought deeper than the convulsion of 1789. That was not all. Waving the Red Flag, it alarmed crowned heads all over Europe and shook down thrones. It had ominous inscriptions on its banners. It terrified

* *Hist. Politique de l'Europe Contemp.*, Seignobos.

property. Central and Eastern Europe followed the peoples of the West. Men began to count up the arguments, or shall we say awoke questioning instincts? What is Progress doing for you and me? they asked, and asked more loudly in all lands. Progress may be grand for the shepherds, but what of the sheep? Socialism slowly grew into an aggressive force. In France it came to the birth during the Bourbon Restoration. Louis Philippe drove it under. It broke out with furious violence in the days of June. In the reign of Napoleon the Third it slumbered. The crash of Sedan awoke it into fitful activity. To-day it seems to have reached that further stage, long attained in England, when reformers, instead of declaiming on the social question as if it were some single portent overhanging the world, deal with this and that social question in particular.

One of the most ingenious chapters in our short book is an attempt to achieve the reconciliation, so ardently and with such good reason desired by party managers and others, between Liberalism and Socialism, and to convince us that the breach of principle between them is much smaller than might appear upon the surface. Whether the effort amounts to demonstration will be regarded by some as dubious. It is, says Mr. Hobhouse, one of the paradoxes of the reaction that has prevailed for twenty years, that the doctrines of the old Liberalism have lately found some of their staunchest

defenders among men who had been wont to look upon most of those doctrines as worn-out platitudes and texts for the obstruction of further progress. In the fight made by the Labour party and the Socialists generally against the South African War, as in the defence of Free Trade, the Socialist leaders and the most notable spiritual descendants of Cobden and Mill stood upon the same platform. Was this alliance, he asks, an accident, or did it arise out of the nature of things, the logical working out of principles in political practice?

He takes a concrete case. Cobden was in favour of prohibiting or restricting the labour of children in a mine or a cotton factory. In this limitation the author discerns two principles. In the first place the child's apparent freedom of contract was not real freedom. In the second it was recognised that the State has a responsibility for, and an interest in, all the conditions that, when operating on a large scale, determine the health and well-being of the community's own members.

Mr. Gladstone's famous legislation of 1870 and 1881 again, withdrawing Irish land from the ordinary sphere of contract, furnishes a second example. To say that the Irish cottier was free to make a fair and open bargain with the landlord might be in mere words true, but in relation to the real circumstances it was absurdly untrue.* So, adopting the principle that where the necessities of one of

* See above, pp. 206-15.

the parties to a bargain deprive the seeming freedom of choice of all substance, it is expedient to regulate the bargain by law, Mr. Gladstone persuaded Parliament to give the tenant a perpetuity in his holding and to set up a court to fix the rent. I may note in passing, as a point in the history of Liberalism or Democracy or whatever else we call it, that nothing short of Mr. Gladstone's own intense readiness of perception, his vast authority, and his extraordinary driving power, could have carried this immense innovation upon the accepted doctrines of free contract and competitive rent, through a cabinet of landlords, lawyers, and economists. Some, no doubt, viewed the whole operation with the deepest misgivings. The question nearly broke up the cabinet in 1870, and in 1881 it caused the resignation of the Duke of Argyll—a more definite representative of old-fashioned and current Liberal doctrine than Mr. Gladstone ever was. This, however, is by the way ; and Mr. Hobhouse is certainly not wrong in saying that where a whole class of men is permanently at a disadvantage in its bargains with another, then by strict Gladstonian principle the State has a right to intervene as arbitrator, provided that it can do so with sufficient equipment of knowledge and impartiality.

The conclusion of the matter is, he says, that Liberalism and Socialism are two branches from a single trunk, two tributaries of the common stream of humanitarian improvement. This eirenicon is

clever in analysis, as it is laudable in purpose, and nobody will deny that the two creeds, doctrines, or social tempers, may in a way be reconciled, if the needed definitions and contents are provided for each member of the pair. But a bare logical show of latent identity of principle hardly carries us far enough, though it may both soften sharpness of controversy, and tend to open a way for practical co-operation upon occasion. Socialism, like the other great single names for complex things with which we have been dealing, stands for a wide diversity of doctrine and purpose. But the best definition seems to be that 'in general it has for its end the destruction of inequalities in social condition by an economic transformation.' The gradual smoothing of revolutionary socialism into what has been called electoral or parliamentary socialism, may have chilled the old high ardour of an earlier apostolate. Yet the central aim and principle abide — subordination of individual energy and freedom, not merely to social ends, but to more or less rigorous social direction. This marks a vast difference, and is the dividing line.

What is certain is that Socialism appeals to sentiment, raises questions, involves tendencies, and flows over into a vast area, where Liberalism as ordinarily defined is hardly likely to feel itself at home, and where Liberalism as a school, moreover, appears in no country in Europe to satisfy either the speculative or the practical tests of its vehe-

ment socialising competitor. After all, the more or less of State action is only one point in the contest. So far as that goes, what is curious is that England, where Socialism has as a body of doctrine been least in fashion, has in action carried Socialism in its protective or restrictive aspect further than most other countries. The real issue surely cuts far deeper than this. That issue is at its root the substitution of a new economic system for an old one that was long deemed entirely uncontested. It points to revolution in the relation of workman and capitalist. It tests the foundations of two such venerable pillars of our economic fabric as Rent and Interest. It suggests that the problem of to-day is not production but distribution — a specious form of words that hides a whole crop of fallacies. It involves vital changes in the institution of private property, and in all that enormous and absorbing volume of human thoughts, passions, habits, and aims in life, with which the institution of private property is, and has been for centuries, inextricably associated. It is unhistoric and even anti-historic, and hints that each generation is a law to itself — with some awkward implications for the fund-holder, who makes the taxpayer of to-day ruefully provide money for the 'old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago.' All this stands equally good (or equally evil, if the reader chooses) whether the old view of property be invaded by the wild storm of social revolution, or more insidi-

ously by the mailed fist of the tax-gatherer and the rate-collector. On this side, too, English democracy has gone, and is going, further in the Socialist direction than foreign communities armed in full panoply of universal suffrage. Our progressive income-tax and death-duties with their sliding scales — the State arbitrarily equalising private fortunes by inequalities of public charge — involve an invasion of the rights of individual property, and therefore of individual liberty, that is up to now rejected both in the French Republic and in the American Republic, and that certainly would have made the men of 1789 and 1793 'stare and gasp.'

Nobody knows better than Mr. Hobhouse into what deep floods his boat is here being drawn. A little book of his upon the Labour Movement a dozen years ago was a serious, though a partial, attempt to plumb these very waters. Nobody knows better that five or six short pages are far too few even to touch the fringe of problems so tremendous. As society grows more complex, calls upon the State wax louder. Yet this very complexity makes intervention more delicate. A generation has passed since Mill, with that patient prescience of his, projected and began a book on Socialism; and in the fragment that was given to the public * he warned his readers that the future of mankind would be gravely imperilled if these great questions were left to be fought over between

* *Fortnightly Review*, 1879.

ignorant change and ignorant opposition to change. Since then the discussion has been varied, abundant, tolerably well informed, and in good faith enough to satisfy even Mill, '*si non cum corpore extinguntur magne animæ.*' Nobody was ever more keenly alive than he was to risks of Socialism, and yet he used to say that if the only conceivable alternative were nothing better than the perpetuation of our existing system with its hideous wrong, degradation, and woe, he would face Socialism with all its risks. He did not dream that there is 'any one abuse or injustice now prevailing in society, by merely abolishing which the human race would pass out of suffering into happiness.' What is incumbent upon us, he said, is a calm comparison between the two different systems of society; to see which of them affords the greatest resources for overcoming the inevitable difficulties of life. The world meanwhile revolves in its appointed courses. *Securus judicat.* Improvements are made far less on the strength of this or that abstract principle, as Mr. Hobhouse is perhaps too readily inclined to suppose, than under the pressure of social need or exigency, and until the need has come into such light as to rouse and arm the political forces required to overthrow the obstacles. 'Everywhere and always,' said Armand Carrel, 'it is the wants of the time that have created the conventions called political principles, and the principles have always been pushed aside by

the wants.' All questions of government, let us be sure, have their data in the condition of society and nowhere else. In England, by merit or good luck, men have never allowed the ideal to be wrecked by the chimera. Meanwhile, even private property is no longer generally argued as one of the natural rights of man; its incidents are considered and settled by the common modern criterion of all these matters — to wit, the balance of social advantage.

As for that form of Socialism which is nothing more than wholesale and omnipotent bureaucracy, Mr. Hobhouse deals with it most faithfully. He perceives that the new cant about 'Efficiency' is little better than the old cant of the good despot, without the good despot's grasp and energy. Liberalism, he says truly, may easily be perverted into an unlovely gospel of commercial competition, in which mutual help is denied as a means of saving the feckless from the consequences of their own character, the impulses of pity are repressed, and self-interest is clothed with the sanctity of a stern duty. Collectivism, on the other hand, has undergone a corresponding perversion on its own account. The liberal and democratic elements are gradually left out or thrust into obscurity, the free spontaneous moral forces are pooh-poohed, and all the interest is concentrated on the machinery by which life is to be organised. Everything is to fall into the hands of an Expert, who will sit in an office

and direct the course of the world. There are some difficulties about the character of the expert.

In the socialistic presentment he sometimes looks strangely like the powers that be — in education, for instance, a clergyman under a new title; in business that very captain of industry who at the outset was the Socialist's chief enemy. Be that as it may, as the Expert comes to the front, and Efficiency becomes the watchword of administration, all that was human in Socialism vanishes out of it. Its tenderness for the losers in the race, its protests against class tyranny, its revolt against commercial materialism, all the sources of the inspiration under which Socialist leaders have faced poverty and prison, are gone like a dream, and instead of them we have the conception of society as a perfect piece of machinery pulled by wires radiating from a single centre, and all men and women are either experts or puppets. Humanity, Liberty, Justice are expunged from the banner, and the single word Efficiency replaces them. Those who cannot take their places in the machine are human refuse, and in the working of a machine there is only one test — whether it runs smoothly or otherwise. What quality of stuff it turns out is another matter. A harder, more unsympathetic, more mechanical conception of society has seldom been devised.

IX

It has been justly said that the government of Jesuits in Paraguay is the only thing that gives an approximate idea of this bureaucratic Elysium. In truth, argument from abstract principles sounds

but a scraffle note in the ears of men and women who have once got into their hearts the famous comparison, in Mr. Bellamy's Utopian vision, of modern society with 'a prodigious coach, which the masses of humanity were harnessed to, and dragged toilsomely along a very hilly and sandy road'; and how at bad places in the road the desperate straining of the team, their agonised leaping and plunging under the pitiless lashing of hunger, the many who fainted at the rope and were trampled in the mire, 'made a very distressing spectacle which often called forth highly creditable displays of feeling' from the passengers in tolerably easy though precarious seats upon the coach-top.

It is well for us who live in a time of a certain material prosperity, to remember that it is not people lashed by hunger and trampled in the mire who have made revolutions. It has long been well understood that the peasants were less oppressed in France by feudal burdens, than in other communities in Europe, and this lightening of the feudal load only rendered the portion of it that was left, a hundred times more hateful. For similar reasons any rise in the standard of life tends to quicken discontent that the rise goes no further. So long as it has no root in sour-eyed envy, this discontent itself is a token of progress. I came upon a parable in an interesting American book*

* *The Social Unrest*, by John Graham Brooks (New York : Macmillan, 1903).

the other day, of a retired Cape Cod captain, who gave the writer a list of things that entered into the usual consumption of a family sixty years ago. He compared the list with the articles now used in the same neighbourhood. After reflecting, he said, 'My father wanted fifteen things. He got about ten, and worried because he did not get the other five. Now I want forty things, and I get thirty; but I worry more about the ten I can't get, than the old man used to about the five he couldn't get.' Lassalle knew what he was about when he deplored 'the infernal Wantlessness' of men. One clause in any definition of advance in civilisation might be that progress lies in the constant increase in the number of things wanted, in the number of those who want them, and the greater worry if the things wanted are not got. What, cries the sceptic, what has become of all the hopes of the time when France stood upon the top of golden hours? Much has come of them, for over the old hopes time has brought a stratum of new.

The share of the Christian religion, and its influence in this wide field of coming innovation, is obscure and doubtful. What is to be the working of the sublime moral revolution nineteen hundred years ago upon the material and mechanical revolution of to-day? The Sermon on the Mount has been reproved by bold critics as bad political economy, and it is unquestionably socialist.

Poverty stood high among the early objects of the Christian scheme, but to-day poverty, like chastity (in the extreme sense of abstention from marriage), is one of the dead virtues, and the acquisition of property by labour and thrift, like the quiverful of family, is counted as an element of good citizenship. On the latter of these two points the last word has not been spoken, and the question of population dogs our projectors of social regeneration in stealthy ambush. 'It would be possible for the State,' Mill said, to 'guarantee employment at ample wages to all who are born. But if it does this, it is bound in self-protection, and for the sake of every purpose for which government exists, to provide that no person shall be born without its consent.' Only one prominent man, I think, in our time has ventured to touch this dangerous question, and he was sentenced to prison for his pains.

Something has already been said on Mr. Hobhouse's view that changes in religious belief have tended to lower the ethical temperature in national life. Mr. Goldwin Smith finds in these changes one source of the fiery new faith, that the human lot can be made level by new economies. 'Eagerness,' he says, 'to grasp a full share of the good things of the present life has been intensified by the departure, or decline, of the religious faith which held out to the unfortunate in this world the hope of indemnity in another. "If to-morrow

we die, and death is the end, to-day let us eat and drink; and if we have not the wherewithal, let us see if we cannot take from those who have." So multitudes are saying in their hearts, and philosophy has not yet furnished a clear reply.* This, however, is far too profound a theme even to be touched in these meditative musings of a reviewer.

Whether democracy will make for peace, we have yet to learn. So far democracy has done little in Europe to protect us against the turbid whirlpools of a military age. But bright signs shine on the horizons of the time. Strenuous efforts are being made to improve that body of accepted usages and regulations which we call International Law. The progress of Arbitration, though the impatient may find it slow, is very real, and considering the impediments in the worst passions of men, it is extraordinary. The Hague Tribunal opens a new door of hope. Already two of the lesser States of Europe have agreed to submit all disputes of whatever kind that may arise between them to its decision. While all of us—in face of the new and extraordinary redistribution of the forces of race and nation—will take good care meanwhile to keep our powder dry, let us at least dream of a day to come when mightier States will do something to follow that example. Time was when Holland, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was the refuge of free churches

* *Essays on Questions of the Day* (1891), p. 1.

and free printing-presses, and it is a continuity of noble tradition that Holland should now be the formal and accredited refuge of public right and the world's peace.

On the chapter of property, too, for the hour the omens of stability are sound. If there is one man living to-day whose utterances may be taken for the voice of democracy on its largest scale, it is the President of the United States. Here is what Mr. Roosevelt wrote three years ago:

There are plenty of ugly things about wealth and its possessors in the present age, and I suppose there have been in all ages. There are many rich people who so utterly lack patriotism, or show such sordid and selfish traits of character, or lead such mean and vacuous lives, that all right-minded men must look upon them with angry contempt; but, on the whole, the thrifty are apt to be better citizens than the thriftless; and the worst capitalist cannot harm labouring men as they are harmed by demagogues. As the people of a State grow more and more intelligent, the State itself may be able to play a larger and larger part in the life of the community, while at the same time individual effort may be given freer and less restricted movement along certain lines. . . . There may be better schemes of taxation than those at present employed; it may be wise to devise inheritance taxes, and to impose regulations on the kinds of business which can be carried on only under the especial protection of the State; and where there is a real abuse by wealth it needs to be, and in this country generally has been, promptly done away with; but the first lesson to teach the poor man is that,

as a whole, the wealth in the community is distinctly beneficial to him ; that he is better off in the long run because other men are well off ; and that the surest way to destroy what measure of prosperity he may have is to paralyse industry and the well-being of those men who have achieved success.*

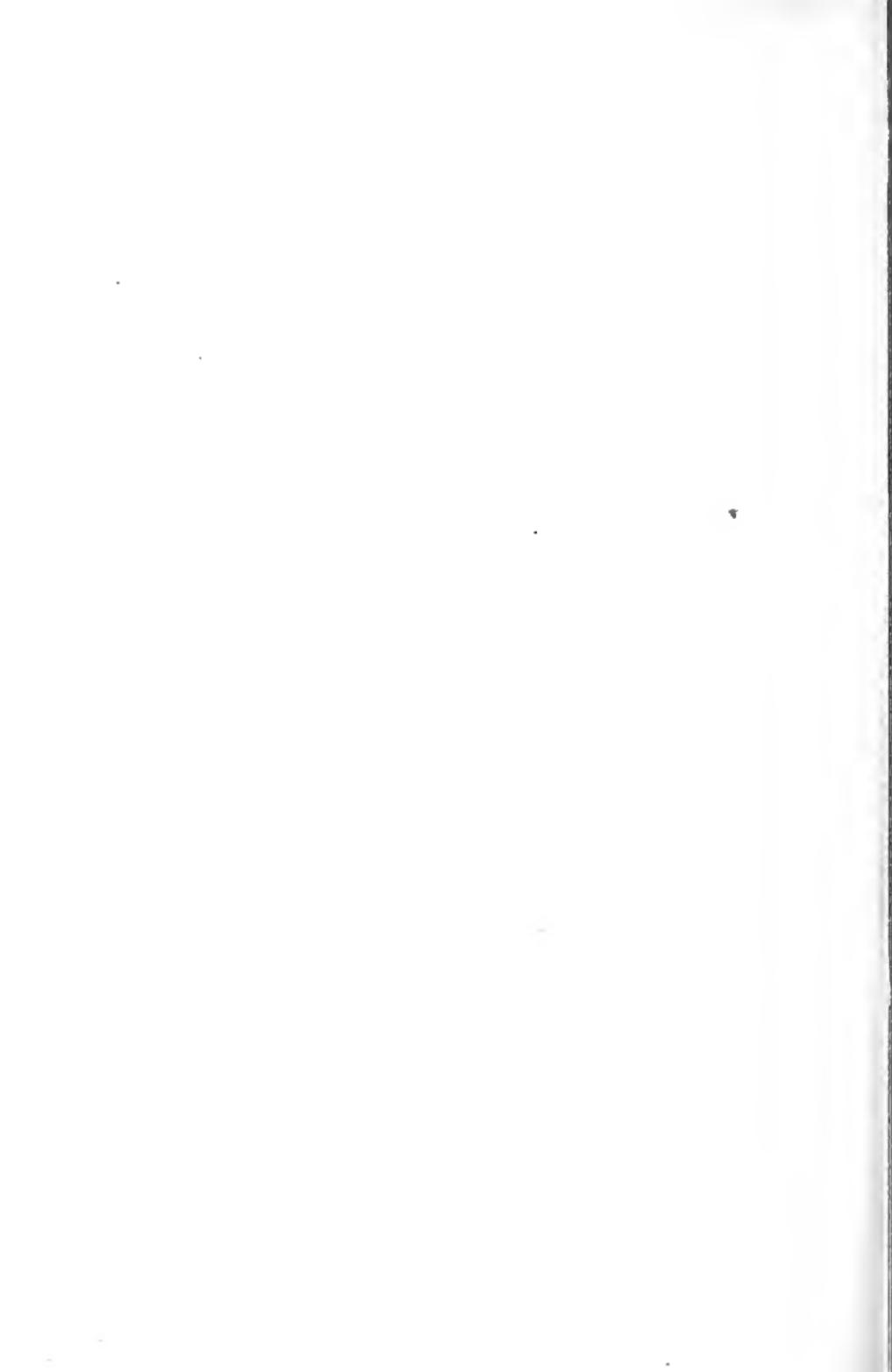
It is interesting, in contrast to such a passage, to recall Macaulay's well-known letter to a gentleman in New York in 1857 : 'The day will come when, in the State of New York, a multitude of people, none of whom has had more than half a breakfast, or expects to have more than half a dinner, will choose a legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of a legislature will be chosen ? On one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of public faith. On the other is a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink champagne and to ride in a carriage while thousands of honest folks are in want of necessities ? Which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by a working man who hears his children cry for more bread ? . . . There is nothing to stop you. Your constitution is all sail and no anchor.'

Yet amid fierce storm and flood for the fifty years since Macaulay wrote, the American anchor has proved itself no mere kedge. Moral forces decide the strength and weakness of constitutional

* *American Ideals* (1902), pp. 210-211.

contrivance. The hunger for breakfast and dinner has not been the master impulse in the history of civilised communities. Selfish and interested individualism has been truly called non-historic. Sacrifice has been the law — sacrifice for creeds, for churches, for kings, for dynasties, for adored teachers, for native land. In England and America to-day the kind of devotion that once inspired followers of Stuarts, Bourbons, Bonapartes, marks a nobler and a deeper passion for the self-governing Commonwealth. Democracy has long passed out beyond mere praise and blame. Dialogues and disputations on its success or failure are now an idle quarrel. Democracy is what it is. Its own perils encompass it. They are many, they are grave. Spiritual power in the old sense there is none ; the material power of wealth is formidable. Like kings and nobles in old time, so in our time, the man in the street will have his sycophants and parasites. At least, as we close Mr. Hobhouse's little book, it is a satisfaction to remember that during these last years of spurious Imperialism in our country, he and other writers of his stamp — instructed, able, diligent, disinterested, and bold — were found to tell both masses and directing classes what they judged to be the truth. This is what the salvation of democracy depends upon.

APPENDIX



APPENDIX

NOTES TO MACHIAVELLI

¹ The most complete account of the voluminous literature about Machiavelli up to 1858 is given in Robert Mohl's *Geschichte und Literatur der Staatswissenschaften*, iii. 521, etc.

A later list is given by Tommasini, *La Vita et Gli Scritti di N. M.*, i. 56–8. See also Villari; of Lord Aeton's learned Introduction to the *Prince*; and especially the bibliography attached to Mr. Burd's valuable chapter vol. i. of the *Cambridge Modern History*, pp. 719–26.

Of the French contributions, Nourrisson's *Machiavel* (edition of 1883) seems much the most vigorous, in spite of occasional outbreaks of the curious feeling between Frenchmen and Italians. Among political pamphlets may be named *Dialogue aux enfers, entre Machiavel et Montesquieu, ou la politique de Machiavel au 19^e siècle: Par un Contemporain* (1864)—an energetic exposure of the Second Empire.—*Machiavel, et l'influence de sa doctrine, sur les opinions, les mœurs, de la politique de la France pendant la Révolution: par M. de Mazères*; Paris, 1816—a royalist indictment of Machiavelli, as the inspirer alike of Jacobins and Bonaparte. M. Tassin's *Gianotti, sa vie, son temps, et ses doctrines* (1869), published on the eve of the overthrow of the Second Empire, and seeming to use the Italian publicist mainly as a mask for condemning the French government of the day. Gianotti (1492–1572) was of Savonarola's school, and M. Tassin uses him as a foil for Machiavelli. Others of less quality are: *Dante, Michel-Ange, Machiavel*. Par C. Calemard de Lafayette. Paris, 1852.—*Essai sur*

les œuvres et la doctrine de Machiavel. Par Paul Deltuf. Paris, 1867. — *Machiavel, Montesquieu, Rousseau.* Von Jacob Venedy. Berlin, 1850. Written after the events of 1848 in Germany, the author's object being to show that the three writers named were the representatives of the only three possible systems of government, and of these three Machiavelli stands for all that is wicked and reactionary, Rousseau for progress and humanity. The book is composed, not from any scientific point of view, but to illustrate contemporary politics. Louis Philippe is said (p. 66) to be the greatest scholar that Machiavelli ever had, and there are a good many remarks on the death of 'Machiavellismus' in France and Germany, which have hardly been borne out by history since 1850.

² *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama.* Von Edward Meyer. Wiemar, 1897, p. xi. Mr. Courthope, *History of English Poetry* (ii. ch. 12), has shown how much Marlowe had studied Machiavelli, and states his view of the effect of this study as follows: 'What we find in Marlowe is Seneca's exaltation of the freedom of the human will, dissociated from the idea of Necessity, and joined with Machiavelli's principle of the excellence of *virtù*. This principle is represented under a great variety of aspects; sometimes in the energy of a single heroic character, as in *Tamburlaine*; sometimes in the pursuit of unlawful knowledge, as in *Faustus*: again, in *The Jew of Malta*, in the boundless hatred and revenge of Barabas; in Guise plotting the massacre of the Huguenots out of cold-blooded policy; and in Mortimer planning the murder of Edward II. from purely personal ambition. Incidentally, no doubt, in some of these instances, the indulgence of unrestrained passion brings ruin in its train; but it is not so much for the sake of the moral that Marlowe composed his tragedies, as because his imagination delighted in the exhibition of the vast and tremen-

dous consequences produced by the determined exercise of will in pursuit of selfish objects.' — P. 405.

The reader will remember that Machiavelli speaks the prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, with these two lines : —

‘I count religion but a childish toy,
And hold there is no sin but ignorance.’

It is not denied by Herr Meyer or others, that Marlowe had studied Machiavelli in the original, and Mr. Courthope seems to make good his contention that it was Marlowe's conception of M.'s principle of *virtù* that revolutionised the English drama.

³ ‘Old Nick is the vulgar name for the Evil Being in the north of England, and is a name of great antiquity. We borrowed it from the title of an evil genius among the ancient Danes,’ etc. etc. On the line in *Hudibras*, ‘We may observe that he was called Old Nick many ages before the famous, or rather infamous, Nieholas Machiavel was born.’ — Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, ii. 364. (Ed. 1816.)

⁴ See Tommasini, i. 27–30. Our excellent Ascham declares that he honoured the old Romans as the best breeders and bringers up for well-doing in all civil affairs that ever was in the world, but the new Rome was the home of devilish opinions and unbridled sin, and one of the worst patriarchs of its impiety was Machiavelli. — *Schoolmaster* (1563–8), Mayor's Edition, 1863, p. 86. Fuller, quoted in Mayor's note, expresses a better opinion of Machiavelli, and says that ‘that which hath sharpened the pens of many against him is his giving so many cleanly wipes to the foul noses of the pope and the Italian prelacy’ (1642).

‘At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Venetian senate was asked to permit the publication of Bocealini's *Commentaries on Tacitus*. The request was referred to five of the senators for examination. “It is the teaching of

Tacitus," they said, "that has produced Machiavelli, and the other bad authors who would destroy public virtue. We should replace Tacitus by Livy and Polybius—historians of the happier and more virtuous times of the Roman republic, and by Thucydides, the historian of the Greek republic, who found themselves in circumstances like those of Venice." — Sclopis, *Revue Hist. de droit français et étranger* (1856), ii. 25.

For the literary use made of Tacitus against the Spanish domination in Italy, see Ferrari, *Hist. de la Raison d'Etat*, p. 315.

⁵ An interesting article appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* (December 1896), designed to show the effect of Machiavelli on the English statesmen of the Reformation. The writer admits that there is no evidence to prove that the action of Elizabeth was consciously based on a study of the *Prince*, but he finds, as he thinks, proof positive that Burleigh had studied Machiavelli in a paper of advice from the Lord Treasurer to the Queen. The proof consists in such sentences as these: 'Men's natures are apt to strive not only against the present smart, but in revenging by past injury, though they be never so well contented thereafter'; — 'no man loves one the better for giving him the bastinado, though with never so little a cudgel'; — 'the course of the most wise estates hath ever been to make an assurance of friendship, or to take away all power of enmity'; and so forth. Burleigh very likely may have read the *Prince*, but it is going too far to assume that a sage statesman must have learned the commonplaces of political prudence out of a book.

Cecil asked English ambassadors abroad to procure him copies, and even that harmless gossip, Sir Richard Morison, wiled away his leisure hours at the Emperor's Court in perusing it, making frequent reference to it in his correspondence

(see *State Papers*, Foreign Series, Edward vi. *passim*; Sloane MSS. 1523; and Harleian MSS. 353, ff. 130-9). — Pollard's *England under Protector Somerset*, p. 284.

⁶ Dr. Abbott, attacking Bacon with the same bitterness with which Machiavelli was attacked for three centuries (*Francis Bacon*, 1885, pp. 325 and 457-60), insists that the Florentine secretary was the chancellor's master; but such criticism seems to show as one-sided a misapprehension of one as of the other. Dr. Fowler, once President of Corpus Christi College, has dealt conclusively, as I judge, with Dr. Abbott's case, in the preface to his second edition of the *Novum Organum* (1889), pp. xii-xx, and in his excellent short monograph on Bacon (1881), pp. 41-5.

⁷ Mackintosh reproached Bacon for this way of treating history. Spedding stoutly defends it, rather oddly appealing to the narrative of the New Testament, as an example of the most wicked of all judgments, recounted four times 'without a single indignant comment or a single vituperative expression.' — *Works*, Spedding and Heath, vol. vi. pp. 8-16.

On this last point Pascal says: 'The style of the gospel is admirable among other ways in this, that there is not a word of invective against the murderers or foes of Jesus Christ. For there is none against Judas, Pilate, or any of the Jews; and so forth.' — *Pensées*, Art. xix. 2, Ed. Havet, ii. 39. See also Havet's note, p. 44.

Bacon says M. made a wise and apt choice of method for government — 'namely, discourse upon histories or examples; for knowledge drawn freshly, and in our view, out of particulars, findeth its way best to particulars again; and it hath much greater life in practice when the discourse attendeth upon the example than when the example attendeth upon the discourse.'

⁸ Harrington's view is expressed in such a sentence as this: 'Corruption in government is to be read and con-

sidered in Machiavel, as diseases in a man's body are to be read and considered in Hippocrates. Neither Hippocrates nor Machiavel introduced diseases into man's body nor corruption into government, which were before their time; and seeing they do but discover them, it must be confessed that so much as they have done tends not to the increase but to the cure of them, which is the truth of these two authours.' — *System of Politics*, ch. x.

Elsewhere he compares the Italian to one who exposes the tricks of a juggler.

⁹ *Essays*, i. 156; ii. 391, where he remarks that historians have been almost always friends of virtue, but that the politician is much less scrupulous as to acts of power.

¹⁰ This sentence is Treverret's, *L'Italie au 16^{ème} Siècle*, i. 179. Sainte-Beuve has a short comparison between the two in *Causeries*, vii. 67-70. 'Machiavelli attached himself to particular facts, and proposed expedients. Montesquieu tried to ascend to general principles, and drew from them consequences that were capable of explaining a long series of social phenomena. The Florentine secretary was a man of action, and reproduced in his writings the impressions that he had received from his intercourse with men and business. Montesquieu is always a man of the closet; he studies men in books.' — Sclopis, *Revue Hist. de droit français et étranger* (1856), ii. p. 18.

Comte has worked out the place of Montesquieu and of Machiavelli, *Philos. Pos.* iv. 178-85, and *Pol. Pos.* iii. 539.

¹¹ *La diplomatie au temps de Machiavel*. Par Maulde-la-Clavière. 1892. 3 vols. i. 306, etc. The French gave the signal for the inevitable attack upon the ancient privileges of Latin as the language of diplomacy. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Spain strove to displace French, but did not succeed even when the Spanish power was at its

meridian. In the East, the Turk would have nothing to do with Latin. A Turkish envoy to Venice in 1500, though acquainted with Latin, made it a point of honour only to speak Greek. Charles VIII. did not know Italian, and Louis XII. understood it with difficulty. Machiavelli preferred Italian to Latin. — *Maulde-la-Clavière*, ch. ii. and ch. vi.

¹² See Jacob Burckhardt's admirable work on the *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (English translation by Middlemore), ii. 211. 'Was Germany in the fifteenth century so much better with its godless wars against the Hussites, the crimes of Vehmgericht, the endless feuds of the temporal princes, the shameless oppression of the wretched peasant ?' — *Thudichum*, p. 68.

¹³ The contradictions were noted very early. Bodin's *Republic* appeared in 1576, and there he says: 'Machiavel s'est bien fort méconté, de dire que l'estat populaire est le meilleur ; et néanmoins ayant oublié sa première opinion, il a tenu en un autre lieu, que pour restituer l'Italie en sa liberté, il faut qu'il n'y ait qu'un prince ; et de fait, il s'est efforcé de former un estat le plus tyrannique du monde ; et en autre lieu il confesse que l'estat de Venise est le plus beau de tous, lequel est une pure aristocratie, s'il en fut oncques : tellement qu'il ne sait à quoi se tenir' (vi. ch. 4).

The argument that the *Prince* and *Discourses* are really one work is best stated by Nourrisson, ch. viii. 137-44.

'The modern study of polities, however, begins with Machiavelli. Not that he made any definite or permanent contribution to political theory which can be laid hold of as a principle fertile of new consequence. His works are more concerned with the details of statecraft than with the analysis of the state. But we find in him, for the first time since Aristotle, the pure, passionless curiosity of the man of science.' — Sir Frederick Pollock in the *History of the Science of Politics*, ch. ii.

Tocqueville says: 'I have been reading Machiavelli's *History of Florence* very attentively. The Machiavel of the history is to me the Machiavel of the *Prince*. I do not conceive how the reading of the first can leave the least doubt as to the author of the second. In his history he sometimes praises great and fine actions, but we see that it is with him only an affair of imagination. The bottom of his thought is that all actions are indifferent in themselves, and must be judged by the skill and the success that they exhibit. For him the world is a great arena from which God is absent, where conscience has nothing to do with it, and where everybody gets on with things as best he can.' — Tocqueville, *Correspond.* i. 326-7.

As for Tocqueville, when he came to handle public business in difficult times, some notions with a slightly Machiavellian flavour began to lodge in his mind. For instance:— 'As if you could ever satisfy men, by only busying yourself with their general good, without taking account of their vanity and of their private and personal interests.' — *Souvenirs*, p. 343.

'The versatility of men, and the vanity of these great words of patriotism and right, with which the small passions cover themselves.' — *Ib.* 347.

'My secret consisted in flattering their self-love [Members of Parliament and Cabinet Colleagues], while I took good care to neglect their advice. . . . I had discovered that it is with the vanity of men that you can do the best business, for you often get from it very substantial things, while giving very little substance in return. You will never make as good a bargain with their ambition or their greed. Yet it is true that to deal profitably with the vanity of others, you must lay aside your own and look only to the success of your scheme; and this is what will always make that kind of trade very difficult.' — *Ib.* 361-2.

'Nations are like men; they are still prouder of what

flatters their passions, than of what serves their interests.' — *Ib.* 394.

¹⁴ Sainte-Beuve has pointed out (*Port-Royal*, iii. 362–3, ed. 1860) how Machiavelli is here related to Pascal. Pascal's reason allows no sort of abstraction to mix itself up with social order. He had seen the Fronde at close quarters, for he was a man of the world at that epoch. He had meditated on Cromwell. The upshot of it was to place man at the mercy of custom, and at the same time to condemn those who shake off the yoke of custom. 'Custom ought to be followed only because it is custom, and not because it is reasonable or just. People follow it because they think it is reasonable, and take antiquity for the proof that it is so,' etc. etc. — *Pensées*, Art. vi. 40. Ed. Havet, i. 82.

¹⁵ *Disc.* i. 47. Aristotle, *Politics*, iii. 11; Jowett (*Notes*, p. 129) has an uneasy note upon the point. On the whole, Machiavelli seems to take broader and sounder ground than anybody else.

¹⁶ Baumgarten's view is elaborately stated in his *Geschichte Karls V.* i.; Anhang, 522–36, and Signor Villari's answer in his *Niccolò Machiavelli*, ii. 496–502.

Guido da Montefeltro says in the *Inferno* (xxvii. 75): *L'opere mie non furon leonine, ma divolpe* — 'My deeds were those of the fox, and not of the lion.' Bacon, in a well-known passage, uses a more common figure: 'It is not possible to join serpentine wisdom with the columbine simplicity, except men know all the conditions of the serpent.' — *Advancement of Learning*, ii. 21, 9.

¹⁷ Gregorovius thinks that there are too many arguments both ways for us to form a decided opinion. — *Lucrezia Borgia*, II. c. v. Pastor is confident that it was Roman

fever, and goes fully into the medical question. — *Gesch. der Päpste*, iii. 471-2. Dr. Garnett argues strongly against poison, *English Historical Review*, 1894, ix. 335-9. — Creighton, iv. 43-4.

¹⁸ See *Cæsar Borgia*. Par Charles Yriarte. Paris, 1889.

The Borgian policy is set out with much reason and force in Bishop Creighton's *History of the Popes*, Bk. v. ch. xi, vol. iv. pp. 44-53. Also the character of Cæsar Borgia, pp. 64-6. Dr. Pastor, writing from the catholic point of view, does not shrink from a completely candid estimate of Alexander vi. — See *Gesch. der Päpste*, iii.

¹⁹ The saying of Cosmo de' Medici, *Ist. Fior.* Lib. vii., where Machiavelli reports others of his sayings, and gives a vivid account of Cosmo.

Bacon tells us in characteristic language that Henry vii. desired to bring celestial honour into the house of Lancaster, and begged Pope Julius to canonise Henry vi.; but Julius refused, as some said, because the king would not come to his rates, more probably, however, because he knew that Henry vi. was a very simple man, and he did not choose to let the world suppose that saint and simpleton were the same thing. — *History of Henry VII.*; *Works*, vi. 233 (Spedding and Heath).

²⁰ Ferrari, *Hist. de la Raison d'Etat*, 300. *Per la fè il tutto lice.* Ger. Lib., iv. 26.

²¹ 'Frederick the Great of Prussia, in November 1760, published military instructions for the use of his generals, which were based on a wide, practical knowledge of the matter. . . . When he could not procure himself spies among the Austrians, owing to the careful guard which their light troops kept around their camp, the idea occurred to him, and he acted on it with success, of utilising the suspension

of arms that was customary after a skirmish between hussars, to make these officers the means of conducting epistolary correspondence with the officers on the other side. "Spies of compulsion," he explained in this way. When you wish to convey false information to an enemy, you take a trustworthy soldier and compel him to pass to the enemy's camp to represent there all that you wish the enemy to believe. You also send by him letters to excite the troops to desertion; and in the event of its being impossible to obtain information about the enemy, Frederick prescribes the following: Choose some rich citizen who has land and a wife and children, and another man disguised as his servant or coachman, who understands the enemy's language. Force the former to take the latter with him to the enemy's camp to complain of injuries sustained, threatening him that if he fails to bring the man back with him after having stayed long enough for the desired object, his wife and children shall be hanged and his house burnt. "I was myself," he adds, "constrained to have recourse to this method, and it succeeded." — Maine, *International Law*, 150-1.

²² 'A monarch's promises,' Alva writes to Philip II. (1573), 'were not to be considered so sacred as those of humbler mortals. Not that the king should directly violate his word, but at the same time,' continued the Duke, 'I have thought all my life, and I have learned it from the Emperor, your Majesty's father, that the negotiations of kings depend upon different principles from those of us private gentlemen who walk the world; and in this manner I always observe that your Majesty's father, who was so great a gentleman and so powerful a prince, conducted his affairs.' — Motley, *Dutch Republic*, Pt. 3, ch. 9.

More than one historian has pointed out as a merit of Louis XI. (1461-83), that it was he who substituted in government intellectual means for material means, craft for force, Italian

policy for feudal policy. There was plenty of lying and of fraud, but it was a marked improvement in the tactics of power to put persuasion, address, skilful handling of men, into the place of impatient, reckless resort to naked force. Since the days of Louis XI., so it is argued, we have made a further advance; we have introduced publicity and open dealing instead of lies, and justice instead of egotism.—Guizot's *Hist. de la Civilisation en Europe*, xi. p. 307.

²³ The late Lord Lytton delivered a highly interesting address, on *National and Individual Morality Compared*, when he was Lord Rector at Glasgow, and he said this about the case of the Duc d'Enghien: 'The first Napoleon committed many such offences against private morality. But the language of private morality cannot be applied to his public acts without limitations. The kidnapping of the Duc d'Enghien, and his summary execution after a sham trial, was about as bad an act as well could be. But I should certainly hesitate to describe it as a murder in the ordinary sense. Morally, I think, it was worse than many murders for which men have been tried and punished by law. But I do not think that the English Government in 1815 could, with any sort of propriety, have delivered up Napoleon to Louis XVIII., to be tried for that offence like a common criminal.'

²⁴ *Popular Government*. By Sir Henry Maine. 1885, p. 99.

A recent German pamphlet (*Promachiarell*, von Friedrich Thudichum: Stuttgart, 1897) hopes for a second Machiavelli, who will trace out for us, 'with rich experiences and a genial artistic hand,' the inner soul of the Jesuit and of the Demagogue. — p. 107.

²⁵ See an interesting chapter by Professor Nys of Brussels, *Les Publicistes Espagnols du 16^e Siècle* (1890).

²⁶ Nys, *Les Précurseurs de Grotius*, p. 128.

During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries Machiavelli's maxims became the centre of a large body of literature, of which the reader will find a full account in Ferrari's *Hist. de la Raison d'Etat*, part ii. Some interesting points on the Neo-Machiavellism of the nineteenth century are marked by Henry Sidgwick, in his little volume *Practical Ethics* (1898), pp. 52-83.

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